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THE MUSIC OF PETER MAXWELL DAVIES  
BASED ON THE WRITINGS OF  
GEORGE MACKAY BROWN

JOHN SURTEES WARNABY

Vol I of II

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Submitted to the Open University in Candidature for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

February 1990



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THE MUSIC OF PETER MAXWELL DAVIES  
BASED ON THE WRITINGS OF  
GEORGE MACKAY BROWN

JOHN SURTEES WARNABY

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## ABSTRACT

The primary objective has been to demonstrate the stylistic changes in Maxwell Davies's music which have resulted from his settings of Mackay Brown texts. This has involved a comparison with some of the composer's earlier works, particularly those with literary associations, and includes a discussion of the problems encountered when responding to 'expressionist' poetry. The differences between 'modernism' in music and in literature have also been considered with reference to some aspects of literary theory.

After a survey of Maxwell Davies's Mackay Brown settings in several genres, illustrating the extent to which the composer has been influenced by Mackay Brown's approach to narrative, especially with regard to his use of the multiple viewpoint, attention is focused on Maxwell Davies's Black Pentecost and Second Symphony. This comparison shows that the technique employed for a Mackay Brown setting and that for a large-scale symphony are essentially the same, and that the differences are a matter of style, rather than compositional method.

The thesis then develops the argument that because of the variety of styles employed by Maxwell Davies, conventional analysis has failed to deal adequately with all aspects of his music, most notably when texts are involved. Thus it is suggested that literary concepts can provide valuable illumination,

particularly as regards the composer's use of 'defamiliarization' to create a subversive effect. This device has frequently been employed in scores reflecting Maxwell Davies's attitude to cultural, political, or social issues - again developing aspects of Mackay Brown's influence - and in the light of recent trends in music analysis and literary theory, it forms the basis of a discussion of Resurrection, which was conceived partly in response to the principal themes of Thomas Mann's Doktor Faustus. However, while Mackay Brown indirectly influenced the structure of the opera, the stylistic changes resulting from his influence have meant that the satirical vein of Maxwell Davies's pre-Orkney works could not be recaptured.

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My two supervisors provided invaluable academic and practical advice. Dr Trevor Bray read and commented on various versions of the text and prepared the final draft. Dr Trevor Herbert enabled me to obtain a variety of published and unpublished material, while offering guidance concerning the overall structure of the thesis.

The following organizations allowed me to borrow important documents containing many of the sources cited in the thesis: the Music Department, University

of Birmingham: David Roberts's thesis, 'Compositional Techniques in the Music of Peter Maxwell Davies'; the Scottish Poetry Library: Several publications containing writings by, or about, George Mackay Brown; University Microfilms International: Theses by K. Kluszynski, A.L. Silsbee and C.A. Tongier.

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# THE MUSIC OF PETER MAXWELL DAVIES

## BASED ON THE WRITINGS OF

GEORGE MACKAY BROWN

### Introduction

In his programme note for Worldes Blis,<sup>1</sup> the composer wrote that he 'had in its form defined, in a way which made immediate and instinctive sense, the future environment in which I was to compose, when the music, as it were, materialised into a physical landscape'. Though these remarks were penned with hindsight - the work having been withdrawn for some years following its unsuccessful premiere - they point to a number of features of the 1960's compositions which prefigured the music Maxwell Davies was to write after settling in the Orkney Islands. Following his early development, which will be traced in Chapter 2, Section 2, there was a gradual change of emphasis from the setting of liturgical to literary texts, as the composer constructed the libretto of his opera, Taverner, and evolved a compositional technique designed to satisfy its expressive and dramatic demands.

Allied to the opera, Maxwell Davies became increasingly interested in themes which were being independently explored by George Mackay Brown in an entirely different manner. The time during which their preoccupation with similar themes coincided can be specified fairly

precisely as the period inaugurated by the composition of Revelation and Fall (1965-1966), and also including L'Homme Arme (1968) (later Missa Super 'L'Homme Arme') and when Mackay Brown was writing A Spell for Greencorn (1967). It was a time of considerable cultural change, when the creative imagination appeared to be liberated in the arts, the sciences, psychology and philosophy (including religion), and even those areas bordering on all four categories, loosely defined as the occult. Maxwell Davies discovered he was confronting 'the Antichrist . . . within my own self',<sup>2</sup> and as the final Station of Vesalii Icones makes clear, the emergence of such a figure represented a substantial creative upheaval. It was no longer possible to distinguish between the 'true' or the 'false' Christ, between good and evil. The effect was akin to releasing a genie from a bottle in that nobody could predict the consequences, and the crisis reached its culmination with the composition of Taverner. Despite Maxwell Davies's and Mackay Brown's preoccupation with similar themes at this time, the opera embodies the chief distinction between Maxwell Davies's and Mackay Brown's output during the later 1960s. It reflects the fact that the cultural climate militated against the kind of religious certainty expressed by Mackay Brown, and its dramatic tension may well have been generated by the

composer's realisation that any attempt to reconcile similar themes with the prevailing ideas of the period would lead to a conflict between strictly musical preoccupations and broader aesthetic issues. John Taverner's 'conversion', and the White Abbot's martyrdom are not only concerned with the nature of religious belief, but also with the dichotomy between tradition and innovation. The emergence of the Jester/Death as controller of Taverner's destiny, following his staging of a mock crucifixion in which he assumes the role of 'Joking Jesus' (Act I, Scene 4), is in accordance with the idea that 'in a Godless world, to create God after one's own image is to call up the devil'.<sup>3</sup> This is one of the principal themes of Thomas Mann's Doktor Faustus,<sup>4</sup> and as Joseph Kerman has pointed out, the link between Taverner and the central protagonist of the novel is strengthened in Act II, Scene 4. The fictional account of Adrian Leverkühn's first completely serial work described its conclusion in terms that can readily be applied to Maxwell Davies's score. Both works fade into silence before the music is fully resolved because they symbolize problems that are not confined to the realm of composition. The dignity of the White Abbot's extended aria prior to his execution underlines the falsity of Taverner's 'conversion'. Moreover, the White Abbot's execution renders Taverner's 'redemption' meaningless, since this is the only reward he receives

for his renunciation of Catholicism and of music. Having been tricked into an acceptance of the role of persecutor in the name of 'reform', Taverner is left to face the full implications of what he has lost as a result of his sacrifice.

The significance for Maxwell Davies of the issues explored in the opera can be gauged from his identification with John Taverner to the extent that substantial extracts from the latter's Missa Gloria Tibi Trinitas are incorporated into the opera, with the 'In Nomine' forming the basis of his serial manipulations and 'transformation processes', as well as from his deliberate choice of a discredited account of Taverner's career because it corresponded closely with his own concerns, especially 'the nature of betrayal at the deepest levels'.<sup>5</sup> A comparison with Thomas Mann's approach to related themes also emphasizes the 'subjectivity' of Maxwell Davies's creative impulse. The structure of the opera combines elements of linear narrative with cyclic form as the psychological drama is depicted in association with a clearly defined historical context. As such, it exemplifies the conflict between 'realism' and 'modernism' (Chapter 3).

By contrast, the objectivity achieved in Doktor Faustus stems from the uniformity of Mann's response -

imaginative and technical - to the historical events of the early twentieth century in relation to the German cultural tradition. Mann's narrative technique, in which the life story of the main protagonist and his creative function within society is told by a 'close friend' in the manner of a 'biography' conforms to the tenets of nineteenth-century 'realism'. Although the first person narrator, Zeitblom, can be regarded as the 'representative' of the author, he is also a 'distancing' device, reflecting Mann's enforced exile, following the advent of Nazism. The decision to focus his re-telling of the Faustian myth on a composer, thereby transferring his personal experience into a different sphere of creativity, was another factor contributing to the 'detached' style of the novel. It enabled him to respond to the challenge of attempting to reconcile the fact that the artist's traditional role was rendered impotent by the Nazi era with the historical development of German music and literature. Following Michael Chanan's example, it will be argued that Mann's interpretation of the Faustian dilemma exerted a powerful, though indirect influence on St Thomas Wake (Chapter 3), but that the novel's thorough-going 'Realism', particularly its adherence to conventional linear structure, were incompatible with post-'tonal' composition. The composer's preoccupation with Doktor Faustus reached its zenith in

Resurrection (Chapter 8), where he combined a libretto based on Mackay Brown's narrative technique, with an attempt to recapture the musical style of the later 1960s. It will be argued that the general critical failure of the opera, conceived as a sequel to Taverner, confirmed that while Mackay Brown's influence had encouraged Maxwell Davies to formulate a compositional style which could accommodate extended texts, as well as large scale 'symphonic' structures - both of a relatively traditional character - it prevented him from achieving the impact of Taverner and the associated works. Similarly, it will be claimed that James Joyce's techniques of combining 'stream of consciousness' with the evocation of external 'reality' within a cyclic framework, together with his aesthetic principles, have made a considerable impression on Maxwell Davies, most notably in Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé', but that, as with Thomas Mann, the influence has so far not been reflected in a setting of a Joycean text.

It is through the advent of Mackay Brown that the creative legacies of Mann and Joyce have been given expression and that St Thomas Wake and Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé' have achieved their pivotal status.

The works of the later 1960s can be regarded as

'satellites' of Taverner insofar as they share its autobiographical significance, recognized by Bayan Northcott in his survey of Maxwell Davies's output up to that period. He stressed the link between the demise of Medieval Catholicism following the Reformation, and the emergence of 'a powerful and divided personality' as the composer sought to interpret these events.<sup>6</sup> In both cases, stability was replaced by uncertainty, so that while Maxwell Davies continued to use Medieval principles as the basis of his compositional technique, and was no less aware of their symbolic connotations in relation to the 'hierarchy of values' which underpinned pre-Reformation culture,<sup>7</sup> they were opposed by a 'subjective' element derived from post-Reformation culture, culminating in the concept of 'modernism'. The most enthusiastic proponents of 'modernism' were advocating the wholesale rejection of traditional forms, harmony, etc., so that John Taverner's predicament became an analogy for Maxwell Davies as he attempted to reconcile the demands of the new orthodoxy (the 'avant-garde') with the expressive needs of his libretto. In keeping with the exigencies of the drama, the concluding scene of the opera represents a decisive re-assertion of more traditional compositional values, particularly in view of the presence of parody and distortion in the preceding scenes. Thus the equivocal ending symbolized not only Taverner's failure, but also Maxwell Davies's



realisation that unqualified acceptance of the tenets of 'modernism' was impossible, notwithstanding the absence of a satisfactory alternative. In Chapter 3, it will be suggested that the crisis had been prefigured in Revelation and Fall, where the exploration of a characteristic facet of the new aesthetic - Austro-German 'expressionism' - had provoked a dislocation of music and text. However, it will be suggested that the tranquil conclusion of that work foreshadowed the vocal manner Maxwell Davies was to adopt once he had discovered the suitability of Mackay Brown's texts for his compositional requirements.

Mackay Brown's writings fulfilled Maxwell Davies's needs in a number of ways. His work shows an awareness of the polarity between 'realism' and 'modernism'. By concentrating on his own small community and adapting his technique to an appropriate scale, he has been able to establish a delicate balance between the two extremes, which has proved peculiarly amenable to musical setting. Equally important are the thematic similarities: the comparison between a 'timeless past' with its ambiguous borderline between fact and folklore, repeatedly explored through evocations of the lives of Storm Kolson and St Magnus, and more recent history. His preoccupation with what he regards as the destructive forces of the Reformation articulates one of

the fundamental areas of agreement that existed between himself and Maxwell Davies before they were familiar with each other's output. Mackay Brown's fascination with the Vikings's domination of Medieval Orkney society following their conversion to Christianity is paralleled by Maxwell Davies's interest in all aspects of the Medieval era, especially the importance attached to monasticism. Both regard the decline of Christian influence as stemming from the Reformation, and some of their most significant work revolves around the events of that period. Knox's wild hogmanay (Chapel Between Cornfield and Shore from Loaves and Fishes) gave rise to heresy and witchcraft trials which feature prominently in Mackay Brown's A Spell for Greencorn and form the basis of several short stories. Maxwell Davies used such events as important source material for Taverner, and their influence is apparent in the imagery and symbolism of several of his scores of the late 1960s and early 1970s, including Vesalii Icones, The Devils and Blind Man's Buff. The composer's subsequent adoption of many quintessentially Mackay Brown images symbolizing the resurrection and suggesting that 'new ceremonies will replace the 'solid round of stone and ritual' has helped him to redefine all aspects of his creative activity.

Mackay Brown's influence can be felt in Maxwell Davies's

increasing emphasis on modifying traditional models. It is apparent in the role he has forged in relation to the Orkney community, and insofar as this has provided the basis of his views concerning the function of the composer in a broader cultural context, it has pervaded virtually everything he has written since the early 1970s.

#### Notes

- 1 Paul Griffiths, 1982, 1.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 S. Pruslin (Editor), 1979.
- 4 Joseph Kerman, 1972.
- 5 S. Pruslin, (Editor), Op. Cit.
- 6 Bayan Northcott, 1969.
- 7 Ibid.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Review of the Literature

This thesis draws on a diversity of sources, including books and articles on both literary theory and music analysis. It also takes account of the fact that in addition to Mackay Brown's writings, Maxwell Davies has made extensive use of other literature, particularly James Joyce's Ulysses and Thomas Mann's Doktor Faustus (Chapters 2 and 8, respectively). Furthermore, the bibliography cites more than a hundred items relating to written, broadcast, or other sources (public lectures, seminars, etc.) emanating from, or concerning both Maxwell Davies and Mackay Brown.

### Literature.

Nevertheless, their contrasting careers are reflected in the amount of literature their output has generated. Maxwell Davies's international standing for more than twenty years has given rise to a good deal of interest throughout the English-speaking world, resulting in several theses, especially from the United States. On the other hand, Mackay Brown's steadfast adherence to his birthplace of Stromness, apart from comparatively brief periods of study in Scotland and Ireland, has meant that his work has appealed primarily to local readers, and the few serious, though limited, studies of his work have been linked to a preoccupation with

the Orkney community. Moreover, Maxwell Davies's settings of Mackay Brown texts have received less attention than the rest of his oeuvre, while the problems arising from the differences between 'modernism' in music and literature have received little consideration.

#### Maxwell Davies.

It is in this respect that the most authoritative study of Maxwell Davies's music is deficient.<sup>1</sup> Roberts provides a comprehensive survey of the techniques adopted by Maxwell Davies from his *Trumpet Sonata* (1954) to works of the later 1970s, *Ave Maris Stella*, the *First Symphony*, and *A Mirror of Whitening Light*. He demonstrates that a strong thread of continuity underpins the composer's development, providing a 'summary of technical features' at the conclusion of most of his chapters to enable the reader to establish quickly the various ways in which Maxwell Davies modified and expanded his early methods in manipulating pitch material and its associated durational values.

Roberts's thesis will be cited as having particular relevance to Maxwell Davies's early development (Chapter 2, Section 2), but it is only in the last two chapters that he deals with the period in which the composer began setting texts by Mackay Brown. In Chapter 8, Roberts discusses Maxwell Davies's use of 'transformation processes'. He shows that from the *Trumpet Sonata* onwards, the composer developed

the idea of subjecting pitch contours to processes of gradual modification, and had devised immensely sophisticated procedures by the 1960s. This involved establishing links between groups of works, and the 'transformation processes' also acquired metaphorical significance. In Chapter 9, he emphasized the extent to which 'magic squares' represented a refinement and simplification of the earlier 'transformation processes', especially the examples discussed in detail, which were drawn from the earlier stages of their use. However, they already embodied a good deal of symbolic value, associated with astrology, the occult, and pre-Reformation Christian thought. Since the completion of Roberts's thesis, sketches have been made available which show elaborations of the 'magic square' principle, such as the use of pairs of related 'squares' in the same work. Maxwell Davies has also indicated that he has employed 'magic squares' in conjunction with other permutatory systems, including some derived from the tarot pack. Consequently, additional layers of symbolism have also been involved.

At the conclusion of Chapter 6, Roberts introduced the analogy of a workshop to clarify the different phases in Maxwell Davies's compositional processes, and suggested that the various transformational systems can be compared with a series of machine tools which perform different functions in fashioning a new composition from the selected fragment of pre-existing material (usually plainsong). However, although

the transforming operations are responsible for re-shaping and extending the raw material, a second phase is needed to complete the work, which Roberts describes as 'hand finishing'. Considerations of style, or of the relationship of the music to the text, belong to the second category, but Roberts's dissertation is primarily concerned with the mechanical aspects of the creative process, rather than the element of style.

One of the most significant characteristics of writing about Maxwell Davies's music is that less attention has been paid to works exhibiting a wide range of styles. Cheryl Ann Tongier failed to address this issue adequately in her thesis<sup>2</sup> exploring Maxwell Davies's use of borrowed material, which is particularly disappointing in relation to the works of the later 1960s, where this factor is unusually pertinent, in that the stylistic variety defies conventional analysis. Tongier's response is largely confined to elaborating the composer's programme notes, with some examples, as well as the observations of other commentators.

Ann Loomis Silsbee encountered the same problem in her analysis of Stone Litany,<sup>3</sup> even though this is one of Maxwell Davies's most stylistically integrated scores. In contrast to Peter Owens,<sup>4</sup> whose Royal Musical Association paper on the work adopted the approach favoured by Roberts, making extensive, though unacknowledged use of the sketches, Silsbee

identified a stylistic ambiguity between the 'tonal' and non-'tonal' movements, and attempted to obviate this difficulty by adopting two analytical strategies: 'set' analysis and 'tonal' analysis. The problem is that while both yielded interesting insights, neither proved entirely satisfactory in relation to the work as a whole. Furthermore, Forte's analytical method, in which the 'sets' are constructed 'in ascending numerical order in such a way that (the elements) are contained within the smallest possible range',<sup>5</sup> obscures the audible experience of the music. Silsbee devised her method in response to the distinction she observed between 'schematic structures and schematic modes of organisation and dynamic structures and processes of growth in the work'.<sup>6</sup> This exemplifies the extent to which Maxwell Davies's music is susceptible to more than one interpretation. In comparison with Owens, whose analysis of the sketches enabled him to identify the plainsong fragments on which Stone Litany is based, Silsbee's Cantus Firmus 2 appears to be an elaboration of her own devising, though the Cantus Firmus 1, and its division into nine phrases, is in accordance with Owens's findings. Such discrepancies at the primary level of organisation obviously influence the interpretation of higher level relationships, including the overall form.

Another consideration is that notwithstanding the various 'transformation processes' and other permutatory procedures, Maxwell Davies's description of his methods in terms of



Medieval/Renaissance concepts (isorhythm), or traditional compositional devices such as canonic working, encouraged other commentators to adopt a similar approach.

7  
Thus, R. E. MacGregor emphasizes the composer's use of the Medieval principles of 'color' and 'talea' in relation to his serial manipulation of pitch and rhythm, isolating different aspects of the Trumpet Sonata than those outlined by Roberts. He also argues that the preoccupation with 'classical' models in the mature works can be traced back to the earliest scores. His discussion of Alma Redemptoris Mater differs strikingly from that of Roberts, not least in his interpretation of Maxwell Davies's deployment of 'sets'. In MacGregor's opinion, the second movement has 'scherzo and trio' characteristics. In the St Michael Sonata, the technical procedures mentioned by MacGregor are generally in agreement with those exhaustively enumerated by Roberts, but his interpretation continues to emphasize the extent to which these 'set' patterns conform to familiar 'models'.

MacGregor's brief outline of some of the early works has been written in the knowledge of subsequent developments, whereas many surveys of Maxwell Davies's career have concentrated on the various phases of his output from a closer perspective. Paul Griffiths' chronological account of the composer's  
8  
development covers the same period as Roberts's thesis. Brief analyses of the main compositional features of the

String Quartet, Antichrist and Ave Maris Stella are interspersed with a general commentary, outlining all the major works up to the late 1970s; there is a substantial interview with the composer, supplemented by a further interview in a more recent study of British contemporary music,<sup>9</sup> and a generous selection of Maxwell Davies's programme notes. Griffiths has also written an article on the Piano Sonata.<sup>10</sup>

The significance of Stephen Pruslin's contributions to Maxwell Davies studies is more problematic. His tendency to concentrate on stylistic and aesthetic issues in preference to technical discussions of the music, and the fact that his writings are occasionally speculative in character, has meant that his criticism has acquired a mixed reputation in academic circles. On the other hand, he has been closely associated with the composer's work for more than twenty years as a member of both the Pierrot Players and Fires of London Ensembles, and his writings reflect the fact that Maxwell Davies regards him as one of the principal interpreters of his music (Pruslin is the dedicatee of the Piano Sonata). Accordingly, there are compelling reasons to assume that his articles have received Maxwell Davies's specific approval.

Pruslin's most important collection is the series of essays he compiled in the late 1970s, covering the first twenty years of Maxwell Davies's career, arranging the items - most

of which had previously appeared in Tempo - into four  
distinct sections.<sup>11</sup> Roughly half the collection deals with  
works up to, and including Taverner, and further details of  
articles by Waterhouse, Payne, Knussen, Pruslin, Josipovici  
and Maxwell Davies are given in the bibliography; as are  
articles on works of the later 1960s and 1970s by Henderson,  
Andrewes, Harvey, Taylor, Chanan and Pruslin. The  
bibliography also gives details of other articles about  
Maxwell Davies from the 1960s and early 1970s, together with  
more recent surveys and reviews of first performances. Two  
deserve special mention: Stephen Arnold's study of Taverner,  
which David Roberts has acknowledged as the starting-point of  
his thesis; and Joseph Kerman's review of the opera's first  
production, which is also pertinent to Maxwell Davies's  
Resurrection, on account of the significance attached to the  
influence of Doktor Faustus.

There are significant entries on Maxwell Davies in at least  
four recent publications. The most valuable is the survey and  
bibliography compiled by Stephen Walsh and David Roberts for  
'The New Grove Dictionary of music'<sup>12</sup> but recent surveys of  
music in Britain and abroad by Francis Routh,<sup>13</sup> Paul  
Griffiths,<sup>14</sup> and Peter Pirie<sup>15</sup> deserve mention.

Maxwell Davies's contribution to music education has been the  
subject of a thesis by Kenneth Kleszynski,<sup>16</sup> as well as  
articles by Shlotel,<sup>17</sup> and Warnaby.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the

composer regards his writings on music, whether concerned with general issues, or with individual works, as fulfilling an educational function. The bibliography refers to two articles dating from the 1950s in which Maxwell Davies outlined his compositional priorities; two from the early 1960s, dealing with music education, especially his work at Cirencester Grammar School; an account of new music in the United States in the early 1960s; and two articles associated with the most turbulent phase of his career in the later 1960s. The bibliography also includes the composer's account of settling in the Orkney Islands and his initial meeting with George Mackay Brown, which appeared in both written and broadcast form. Finally, there is a considerable list of programme notes not collected in Griffiths's book, and which have been published with scores or recordings, or have appeared in festival and concert programme books.

At present, Maxwell Davies is engaged on a major education project for Longmans, which will comprise a series of graded compositions, together with appropriate written material.

#### George Mackay Brown.

The most ambitious publication to date on the work of George Mackay Brown is Alan Bold's George Mackay Brown,<sup>19</sup> even though this is only a slim volume, designed as an introduction to Mackay Brown's writings, rather than a work of detailed scholarship. Its significance stems from the fact that it is still the only attempt to discuss every facet

of his output, even if the consideration of individual items is generally rather cursory. More scholarly articles have tended to concentrate on a single aspect of Mackay Brown's oeuvre, though the narrative element, drawn from the folk and ballad traditions, invariably informs discussions of both his poetry and prose, including his dramatic conceptions.

Poetry has received most attention. Philip Pacey<sup>20</sup> discusses Mackay Brown's poetic achievement under three headings: 'The poetry of a spinner of yarns, of a herald at arms, and of a Catholic creator of sacred images'. His 'storyteller' is frequently the tinker who relates the main events of Orkney history while 'dispassionately observing the life around him'. Pacey sees the author's function as 'a rememberer, for present and future, of the Orcadian past' and argues that the poetry contains a political element in seeking to preserve 'the uniqueness of a place and its people'. It is also subversive against 'the enemies of everything presuming difference', who are not identifiable as such in that they 'ingratiate and seduce, rather than engendering hostility'. The notion of 'progress', allied to the influence of the media, is the major threat which must be countered by 'a line or two of the ancient life-giving heraldry'.

Pacey stresses the emblematic character of Mackay Brown's poetry in which significant images are set apart from their surroundings rather than described. He also refers to Mackay

Brown's contention that all stories are part of a 'great story', whose deepest meaning can only be suggested 'by giving the words a ritual quality'. However, once the ritual has lost its validity, it must be abandoned by the poet in favour of 'the chaos of life whose shaping influence any order denies at its peril'. Pacey interprets Fishermen with Ploughs as embodying this theme, in which the quest for truth takes precedence over dogma. It is also the theme of Mackay Brown's next collection, Winterfold, where old images are again given a new meaning. In establishing many comparisons with the poetry of David Jones, Pacey points out that 'there is only one tale to tell, even though the telling is patient of endless development and ingenuity, and can take  
21  
on a million variant forms'.

22  
Douglas Dunn also concentrates on Fishermen with Ploughs, but in relation to Mackay Brown's earlier poetic development. Instead of tracing parallels with David Jones, Dunn focuses on the influence of Edwin Muir. Even more than Muir, Mackay Brown is regarded as a poet of 'remote island communities and unindustrial non-urban landscapes' with a strong antipathy to 'modernist' poetry. Their Christianity is seen as separating them from the main developments in 'modern' poetry. Like Muir, Mackay Brown is a pastoral poet, sharing the belief that 'civilization' has a brutalizing effect, stemming from its 'capacity of self-destruction'. It is upon this aspect of Fishermen with Ploughs that Dunn concentrates, taking

issue with the apocalyptic aspect of Mackay Brown's writing: 'One is entitled to have second thoughts about . . . a mind, like Brown's, that is so defiantly involved in a way of life that he is prepared to use an imaginative doom and kill off millions for the sake of a fresh start'. Dunn regards the overall meaning of the collection as particularly unsatisfactory as the individual items do not suggest the inevitability of nuclear holocaust, and the idea of retribution visited upon a society which accepts the notion of 'progress' undermines some of the author's finest poetry. Moreover, while both his detached style and the willingness to allow his identification with the local community to take precedence over 'subjective' experience are admirable, his refusal to recognize the merits of the city, or of writers who have imagined 'an ideal cosmopolis' constitutes a severe limitation of vision. Dunn observes that Mackay Brown's pastoral mode is rooted in reality and maintains that the author's complaint against the threat of industrial technology is justified, but his work reflects an avoidance of political decision: 'he never attempts to answer the question, what can be done about what is happening to where I live? In fact, he never asks the question.' He prefers 'to outline an ideal by retrospection, creating an image of the past to act as a spell against the present and future'.<sup>23</sup>

There is a briefer introduction to Mackay Brown's poetry in Seven Poets,<sup>24</sup> in which he is described as 'the least

tormented, the most spiritually secure of the seven poets', interviews with whom are reprinted later in the volume. In  
25  
another Scottish publication, Mackay Brown is among a number of Scottish poets who respond to the following questions: 'What started you writing? What keeps you writing? What is your relationship with poetry or the muse?'  
26  
Elsewhere, Mackay Brown writes about his studies with Edwin Muir at Newbattle Abbey, and one of his most personal statements as a writer was included in a collection of  
27  
autobiographical essays.

There are two articles on Mackay Brown's prose. Neil  
28  
Roberts's review entitled Greenvoe is ostensibly concerned with Mackay Brown's first novel, but devotes most attention to the short story collection, A Time to Keep, and the play, A Spell for Greencorn. Roberts enumerates the author's principal themes as 'the life of the people of Orkney, its historical continuity and the forces that threaten it'. He also observes that Mackay Brown adopts many styles, 'and is not afraid of pastiche'. The ballad tradition influences the way characters are portrayed, and events are presented without explanation or analysis. Roberts also remarks on the ceremonial quality of the language and the author's preoccupation with art, religion and ritual. Throughout his writing, the fiddle symbolizes a tradition that has flourished for centuries. 'Progress', as exemplified in the enthusiasm for novelty, is the enemy of



the fiddler, and also of the Word, but like Dunn, Roberts notes that in Mackay Brown's work 'there is not much engagement with the contemporary realities that he dislikes'.

Elizabeth Huberman's article on Magnus<sup>29</sup> adopts a different standpoint, reflecting the fact that the novel is primarily concerned with a specific phase of Orkney history and legend, and consequently belongs to the unfashionable genre of the historical novel. Yet she argues that in contrast to the typical example of the genre, Mackay Brown creates a plausible model of the complete feudal world of Medieval society, with its various timeless rituals. On the one hand, this timeless quality enables Mackay Brown to develop a series of 'motifs', such as the numerous appearances of The Keeper of the Loom, together with his 'dark double', which symbolize the conflicting aspects of Magnus's character and emphasize the element of ambiguity. On the other, it enables the author to locate the 'action' in both the twelfth and twentieth centuries, so that Magnus' ritual sacrifice is associated with similar events of the recent past.

Accordingly, Huberman suggests that having transformed the strange and remote into the familiar and immediate, the novel returns to the Medieval period to fulfil its allegorical function by relating a miracle to the reconstruction of Orkney society.

The MLA International Bibliography has also listed an article by Elizabeth Huberman on Greenvoe in Critique, dated 1977,

but this has proved unobtainable.

Broadcasting, Public Lectures and Introductory Talks.

A similar pattern can be discerned as regards these sources. Maxwell Davies has been active as broadcaster and public lecturer since the mid 1960s, but only a small amount of this material is readily available. It is not clear the extent to which Maxwell Davies's addresses to conferences, particularly on music education, have been documented, and this applies equally to the numerous television schools broadcasts in which he participated during the 1960s.

The earliest broadcast listed in the British Sound Archives Catalogue is Composer's Portrait,<sup>30</sup> in which Maxwell Davies concentrated on the relationship of his music to the past, especially the importance of the Monteverdi Vespers in the composition of the Leopardi Fragments and the String Quartet. There was also some discussion of his use of early music and its compositional techniques as the basis of his own music, as well as the relationship between music and text as he understood it at that time. Maxwell Davies also emphasized the need for a sound technique acquired by means of an extended apprenticeship, amplifying the articles he had contributed to The Score and The Listener. His more recent public utterances have continued to expound these views. The use of ambiguity as a means of developing compositional ideas in several related works was also considered. Maxwell Davies

expanded these themes in Composers Today,<sup>31</sup> particularly as regards the relationship between innovation and tradition. There were references to literature, especially James Joyce's Ulysses, and this aspect formed the basis of Alan Blyth's conversation with the composer about L'Homme Armé and<sup>32</sup> Revelation and Fall. It was further developed in the discussion between Stephen Walsh and Maxwell Davies about<sup>33</sup> Revelation and Fall, during which the composer focused on Trakl's text, his awareness of the poet's life history, not least his links with the 'expressionist' movement with which Schoenberg was also associated in the years leading up to the first World War.

The bibliography includes details of many documentary broadcasts about Maxwell Davies on both radio and television. There have been programmes associated with Taverner, the founding of the St Magnus Festival, or the composition of the Third Symphony; others have involved general surveys of the composer's career, sometimes involving an extended interview, such as the conversation with Michael Berkeley entitled Works in Progress.<sup>34</sup> Maxwell Davies has also participated in several documentaries dealing with the more general aspects of contemporary music, but the majority of broadcasts have been concerned with introductions to performances of his works, which can be regarded as extensions of his writings. The introductions provided by other commentators on his music fulfil a similar function. Maxwell Davies's public lectures

and pre-concert talks are a further extension of his educational activities. The most significant examples are a lecture delivered at the National Sound Archive, in which he surveyed his entire oeuvre and outlined his debt to tradition;<sup>35</sup> a lecture given at Manchester University in conjunction with the first performance of the Third Symphony,<sup>36</sup> concentrating on his development as an orchestral composer; and a pre-concert lecture outlining the genesis of Black Pentecost, in which he expressed a close identification with the Orkney community and Orkney environment.<sup>37</sup> Public lectures were also a feature of his years as Director of both the Dartington Summer School and St Magnus Festival, and performances of new and recent works are often preceded by pre-concert talks.

In contrast, Mackay Brown has taken part in only a few broadcasts, of which the most significant have been a documentary surveying his development as a writer in relation to the history and folklore of the Orkney Islands,<sup>38</sup> as well as a series of conversations with George MacBeth, concerning the main themes of his poetry.<sup>39</sup> Mackay Brown has also introduced readings of his poetry at the St Magnus Festival, but does not appear to have given any public lectures.

#### Notes.

1

D. Roberts, 1985.

2

Tongier, 1983.

3

Silsbee, 1979.

- 4 Owens, 1984.
- 5 Silsbee, Op. Cit., Page 244.
- 6 Op. Cit., Page 225.
- 7 MacGregor, 1987.
- 8 Griffiths, 1982, 2.
- 9 Griffiths, 1985.
- 10 Griffiths, 1982, 1.
- 11 Pruslin, 1979. 1.
- 12 Sadie (Editor), 1980.
- 13 Routh, 1972.
- 14 Griffiths, 1981.
- 15 Pirie, 1979.
- 16 Kleszynski, 1984.
- 17 Shlotel, 1973.
- 18 Warnaby, 1985.
- 19 Bold, 1978.
- 20 Pacey, 1976.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Dunn, 1974.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Moffat and Matthew, 1981.
- 25 Chapman 16, 1976.
- 26 Akros, 1981, 2.
- 27 Lindsay (Editor), 1979.
- 28 N. Roberts, 1973.
- 29 Ross Roy (Editor), 1981.

- 30 Davies/Smalley, 1965.
- 31 Davies/Goehr/Henze, 1967.
- 32 Blyth, 1968.
- 33 Davies/Walsh, 1970.
- 34 M. Berkeley, 1987.
- 35 Davies, 1984, 1.
- 36 Davies, 1985, 1.
- 37 Davies, 1982, 1.
- 38 Brown, 1981.
- 39 Brown/MacBeth, 1988.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Section 1 - Mackay Brown's Early Development - Early Poetry Collections.

Mackay Brown's adherence to the Orkney environment - apart from brief excursions to Scotland or Ireland - has meant that the major literary developments of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been mediated through the local folk and cultural traditions. The importance of these influences, including recollections of his childhood in Stromness, can be gauged from his autobiographical essay.<sup>1</sup> They constitute the central vision which has motivated his entire output, with its emphasis on tradition and continuity, and form the basis of a small number of fundamental themes constantly re-worked by Mackay Brown irrespective of style, technique, or genre. Alan Bold has suggested that Mackay Brown uses three distinct styles: 'a simple direct style, usually rhymed, . . . employed for contemporary themes; a measured style of great dignity, normally in free verse, which simulates the Saga voice; and a highly wrought, intricately patterned ornamental style<sup>2</sup> which deals with ceremonial subjects'.

These features take precedence over influences derived from Gerard Manley Hopkins, W. B. Yeats, or T. S. Eliot, for while Mackay Brown has demonstrated a considerable knowledge of English-speaking poetry from the past hundred years, including the development of 'modernism', his response to such trends has invariably been characterized by a large measure of detachment. Greater significance is attached to the fact that, despite different forms of expression, certain aspects of human nature and their close ties with the natural environment remain the same. This explains Mackay Brown's tendency to present the same story, usually drawn from history or legend, in different forms, both poetry and prose. It also reflects the manner in which the author believes his writings - journalistic, fictional, dramatic, or poetic - correspond to 'reality'. All his work is based on the assumption that the apparently chaotic surface of everyday life masks a series of patterns unfolding at different speeds. Historical distinctions are as superficial as the different categories of literature. They merely obscure 'reality', and the situation is exacerbated by the widespread acceptance of a particular interpretation of history which promises ultimate prosperity.

In Mackay Brown's writings, certain recurring cycles assume crucial importance: the daily routine of crofters and fishermen; the regular progress of the seasons, associated



with the rituals of ploughing and harvesting, as well as the Catholic liturgy; major landmarks in the span of human existence, together with the Biblical notion of the resurrection; a more variable pattern involving the successive waves of settlers who have found sanctuary in the Orkneys after escaping different forms of disaster. These patterns are supplemented by motifs concerned with voyages and weaving, which function both literally and symbolically, or metaphorically. An analogous distinction between foreground and background can be discerned from the fact that the choice of genre does not necessarily have a direct bearing on the underlying form of the text. On the surface, Mackay Brown observes the conventions of the familiar narrative, dramatic, or poetic traditions (though often in surprising ways), but the essence of the writing is to be found in its relationship to Saga, ballad, folk tale and Biblical story: the main components of an older oral culture. Ultimately, the recurring cycles, and the recurring literary forms through which they are expressed and committed to memory as fables (what Edwin Muir thought of as 'archetypes', or 'eternal symbolic abstractions . . . of everyday existence'<sup>3</sup> complement one another to the extent that Mackay Brown's view of 'reality' corresponds to T S Eliot's idea of a 'time older than the time of chronometers'<sup>4</sup>.

Mackay Brown's preoccupation with non-chronological time

assumed greater importance during the later 1960s when the pervasive threat to the stability of the Orkney community became more tangible.

One of the most significant ways in which he has employed the multiple viewpoint has been to establish the old verbal culture, in conjunction with his knowledge of pre-Reformation Catholicism, as a 'yardstick' against which to measure twentieth century developments, especially the impact on the Islands of industrial technology and the media. Certain aspects of Mackay Brown's denunciation of 'progress' may appear untenable, in view of his acceptance of some of the benefits of contemporary 'civilization', but in view of the growing realization that the notion of 'progress' embodies a false vision of Utopia, his unfavourable comparison with childhood memories of a way of life that had survived for centuries is understandable.

The basis of Mackay Brown's style was formulated in his early poetry. The provincial character of Orkney life during the later 1940s and 1950s can be gauged from Krishan Kumar's discussion of the Arts Council's attempts to break London's monopoly of British culture in his survey of post-war British society and culture.<sup>5</sup> It is evident that during that period, such policies had little effect on the remoter regions, and it was not until the 1960s that a sustained impetus for change emerged with the rapid spread of

television. Characteristically, Mackay Brown's second collection of short stories, A Time to Keep (1969), includes a tale about the superstition attending the first appearance of a wireless set in the valley of Rackwick. In conjunction with other stories concerning the arrival of novelties and new technology in the Islands, it shows that the suspicion of outside influences was not entirely misplaced. The Islands had a flourishing traditional culture, and were afflicted neither by various forms of pollution, nor the mass media's presentation of 'reality' in a manner which is fundamentally (often deliberately) inaccurate.

Mackay Brown's first poetry collection was firmly rooted in the locality. It is typical of an author who has always 'preferred to follow his own vision rather than literary fashion and what does not conform to fashion is not discussed'.<sup>6</sup> Besides adumbrating most of Mackay Brown's basic themes and poetic techniques, 'The Storm' and Other Poems (1954) already begins to exemplify his penchant for creating poetic sequences with a distinct narrative thread in that the fourteen poems, spanning the years 1941 to 1952, are arranged to emphasize the links between individual items.

The Prologue functions as a manifesto, not only of the collection, but also of Mackay Brown's entire output. The collection is also 'introductory' insofar as the first half

of the book concentrates on different verse forms, while the second half provides initial sketches of some of the main characters to be developed in subsequent works. The compactness of the quatrains means that the 'prologue' also presents Mackay Brown's poetic technique in its most compressed form. Within its condensed structure, the 'timeless realm' of the 'poet and saint' is contrasted with the 'domain' of Knox, Marx and Lawrence, whose imaginations were circumscribed by a particular view of history.

The first six poems reach their symbolic and technical culmination in the title poem of the collection. The originality with which Mackay Brown uses traditional devices begins to emerge as he presents a variety of unconventional rhyme schemes and experiments with free verse construction. A distinct impulse towards overall unity is provided by the fact that the author's contemplation of different periods of Orkney history, including the prehistoric past, and particularly the Viking era, is set in a 'timeless' context, established through images of the changing seasons, the Northern Lights, tinkers, sowing and harvesting. Above all, the poems are imbued with Christian symbolism, usually derived from these images and frequently associated with the 'timeless' ritual of death and regeneration. The importance of sacrifice as exemplified by the miracles attributed to St. Magnus's martyrdom also receives its first tentative exploration. In view of Mackay Brown's gradual acceptance of Roman Catholicism, the metaphysical dimension indicated in

the imagery and symbolism of The Storm may well have autobiographical significance - representing an important stage in his conversion. This accounts for the poem's complexity and depth, hardly recognized by Bold's literal interpretation in which 'the storm-tormented voyager finds his feet at last as one of the monks of Eynhallow'. <sup>7</sup> The Storm represents an important stage in Mackay Brown's poetic, as well as his spiritual development, and the 'voyage' motif is established as the linking metaphor, one of the most persistent features of the author's work. The role of the 'voyage' is also significant in terms of the influence of 'modernism' on the technique of the poem. In its literal connotation, it conforms to the linear, or 'realistic', aspect of the poem, whereas the spiritual dimension corresponds to 'internal', or 'subjective', 'reality' and is expressed through metaphor. The description of the storm, which forms the climax of the poem, fulfils an analogous function, transforming the physical drama into an experience of acute psychological turbulence with strong 'expressionist' overtones. The strict division into four-line stanzas proceeds independently of the sentence structure. This fact, as much as the use of enjambement, mentioned by Bold, gives the poem its inexorable quality. It is written from a first-person viewpoint. The use of alliteration forces the reader to adopt a measured pace, yet besides creating a distinctive sonority, it gives the poem the necessary impetus for the generation of tension as the

psychological conflict is developed. The exclamations which punctuate the opening lines also engender momentum, so that the first three stanzas unfold as though cast in a single sentence. The 'speaker' is impelled towards the sea with an urgency that indicates a decisive change of outlook:

'Hounding me there! With sobbing lungs  
I reeled passed Kirk and ale house.'

The ambiguity of 'reeled', implying both the impact of the storm and the influence of the ale house, emphasizes the function of this passage as an 'upbeat' to the main argument of the poem.

The alliteration and momentum also convey a powerful feeling of exertion. One interpretation of the poem might be that the physical effort of combating the storm, realistically described, leads to a condition of hallucination. The transition from 'realism' to metaphor is thus achieved organically, not least through the choice of aural images, whose resonance is developed in the central section. There are echoes of 'sobbing lungs' in 'The sea - organ and harps - wailed miserere', as well as in 'hissing spume'. The increasing turbulence also stems from the precision with which the stanzas are organized, notwithstanding the absence of a discernible rhyme scheme. All three stanzas contain 28 syllables, arranged into lines of between six and eight

syllables, the latter predominating. Following the 'exposition', the change of tempo at the start of the fourth stanza, signifying the beginning of the 'voyage', is marked by the word 'swiftly'. In addition, 'swiftly' signals a change in the pattern of alliteration. The stanzas become irregular, with greater stress on aural and physical, as opposed to visual imagery. The over-riding impression of stanzas 4-7 is of disorientation, 'plunged and spun', and this is immediately associated with a lack of spiritual direction:

'And flung us, skiff and man (wave-crossed, God lost)  
On a rasp of rock! . . . The shore breakers.'

The unpredictability of the line lengths also contributes to the symbolism of these stanzas and the sonorities they evoke resonate into the final section of the poem.

The three stanzas of the concluding section 'mirror' the 'exposition', thereby completing the overall symmetry of the structure, with the four stanzas depicting the storm comprising the central section. The opening of stanza 8 picks up an echo from its predecessor: 'Crossed hands, scent of holy water . . . .' A further echo in the closing lines: '. . . but I/Safe in brother Colm's cell', based on the long-range connection between 'cell' and 'bell', reveals the significance of the second half of stanza 7. The religious

implications of the central episode are confirmed and developed. 'Loud demons' are replaced by a vision of spring which, though not as conclusive as the final verse of St Magnus on Egilshay, in view of the image of flattened corn, provide a smooth transition to the stillness of the concluding stanza, discovered '. . . after/That God sent storm.' A further link between the symbolic and technical stanzas resemble the first three as regards the organization of individual lines, though the syllabic pattern is not reproduced exactly.

The second half of this collection increasingly foreshadows Mackay Brown's expansion into other genres. The tenth poem is a simple description of Rackwick - the location of a great deal of Mackay Brown's subsequent writing - with a reference to 'fishermen with ploughs', anticipating the title of his fourth poetry collection. 'The valley of light' later became the setting of Solstice of Light the sequence he wrote for Maxwell Davies's substantial choral work for St Magnus Cathedral. There is an extract from a verse play, prefiguring the poet's interest in the theatre, while its subject-matter, the daily rituals of crofters, fishermen and their wives, forms the basis of the majority of his short stories. The extract reflects Mackay Brown's vision of the community as an integrated entity, in which the individuality of the islanders ultimately contributes to a series of communal activities. By introducing the theme of the



pilgrimage, or voyage, with its spiritual connotations, the poet forges a link between daily life and the Christian ritual. After settling in the Islands, the Vikings used such expeditions as a means of strengthening the identity of the community, and Mackay Brown's preoccupation with the 'voyage' motif invariably alludes to this aspect of the Viking tradition. The extract concludes with one of the author's most potent symbols: 'God-ripe above Time's ruined labyrinth'.

'The Storm' and other Poems concludes with a self-contained sequence entitled Orcadians: Seven Impromptus, summarizing the preceding poems while introducing new themes and personalities to be developed in later works. These Impromptus are concerned with living memory, and look forward to the majority of the poems in Loaves and Fishes (1959), and The Year of the Whale (1965). They also contain passages where the distinction between poetry and prose is blurred, and where the Orcadian dialect makes its first appearance in Mackay Brown's output. There is an example of the juxtaposition of two apparently unconnected tales which reveal an underlying theme, as well as the use of the multiple viewpoint. The latter is associated with 'Doctor', who exemplifies the impact of an 'outsider' on the community. He is also the first of a series of literary 'devices', enabling the author to outline the history of the Islands and to stress the fact that the Orcadians have

retained their unique identity, despite successive groups of invaders. The anecdotal element is in accordance with the brief sketches which constitute the remaining Impromptus, including one about the demise of the older generations of Orcadians, whose skills are dying with them because twentieth-century 'civilization' has no room for local wisdom or folklore.

Loaves and Fishes; The Year of the Whale.

Both collections were completed before the Orkney Islands were seriously affected by the advent of industrial technology (1959 and 1965, respectively), so that attention is largely focused on the past.

The titles of the three sections of Loaves and Fishes: The Drowning Wave, Crofts Along the Shore, The Redeeming Wave, imply a decisive move towards an integrated sequence, with the outer sections symmetrically arranged around a contrasting central section. The scheme extends the organization of The Storm, and has affinities with the musical concept of 'ternary form'. The application of the idea of 'transformation' to individual poems is extended to the complete selection, as the thematic and symbolic levels of the cycle are directed towards a specifically religious standpoint. Legendary and Biblical events are re-created in terms of an Orcadian context and Mackay Brown invests all his

source material with a Christian significance while exploring the symbolic links that emanate from the surviving remnants of our oral traditions.

Nevertheless, the process is reversed in two poems, based on the author's boyhood recollections. In his autobiographical essay,<sup>8</sup> Mackay Brown wrote that his perception of life corresponded to a succession of 'expanding circles', and this idea becomes the governing factor as the collection unfolds, gradually absorbing all the poet's characteristic themes. It receives its most concise formulation in The Death of Peter Esson, where the salient features of the protagonist's career are compressed into a sonnet. As the poet transforms the life story of a local man into legend by means of verse, he creates a metaphor for the experience of growing up in a small community with a distinctive cultural identity. The 'weaving' motif provides the initial impetus for the poem and the 'voyage' is the mechanism by which Peter's metaphysical transformation is achieved:

' . . . Peter's ark

Freighted for heaven: gale-blown with palm and prayer.

The nautical connotations of 'freighted' and 'gale-blown' are developed through an allusion to the protagonist's metamorphosis into a sailor:

'Peter I mourned. Early on Monday last  
There came a wave and stood above your mast.'

The two motifs are juxtaposed in such a way as to establish a contrast between life and death. Mackay Brown uses the fact that Esson was a tailor not only to incorporate the 'weaving' motif, but also to strengthen its metaphorical value by condensing his life's work into the image of a shroud. His work as the town librarian is treated in a similar manner. 'His thousand books' become a metaphor for material wealth, and he combines Peter's realization that such possessions '. . . would pass/Grey into dust' with his own assertion that the aural tradition will outlast more recent cultural manifestations.

In keeping with this view, Mackay Brown adheres strictly to the conventions of the traditional sonnet, apart from dividing the octave into two stanzas. With the possible exception of lines 10 and 11, depending on how the words 'heaven' and 'needle' are interpreted in relation to the basic rhythm, a ten-syllable line prevails, alluding to the iambic pentameter. Yet by carefully organizing its sentence structure, the poem succeeds in generating the necessary momentum for Esson's final 'journey'. The Octave is devoted to his life in relation to his work (first stanza), and then the community (second stanza). As compared with its three sentences, the Sestet has six. There is a pattern of

progressively shorter sentences in lines 9 to 12, dealing with Esson, the free Kirk elder. Despite his opposition to Calvinism, Mackay Brown commemorates Esson with appropriate imagery - 'predestined needle', 'seventieth rock'. As in the Octave, the symbolism is drawn from the life and beliefs of the community, focusing on the third aspect of Esson's career. Besides referring to the Orkney's seafaring tradition, the concluding couplet presents an image of a final journey from the Islands, whose resonance is drawn from the long history of depopulation extending over two centuries.

Mackay Brown adopts a similar approach in Hamnavoe, deriving his basic metaphor from the fact that his father was a postman. The description of his daily round is developed into a 'portrait' of Stromness as its main 'characters' and features are encountered. The postman's daily journey is counterpointed with the poet's mental 'voyage' into the past, as he distributes memories of the town as it used to exist during his childhood.

In comparison with Death of Peter Esson, Hamnavoe is a more ambitious poem. The original publication contains twelve stanzas, but the version published in Selected Poems (1977) omits Stanza 6. Apart from the five-line concluding stanza, the other stanzas have four lines, but they are unrhymed and the rhythmic pattern is irregular. Alan Bold's assertion that 'the first stanza's syllabic count of 10, 12, 6, 6' sets 'a pattern for the remaining eleven stanzas',<sup>9</sup>

is thus incorrect. The only definite tendency is for the first two lines to be longer than the second two. The sentence construction also shows Mackay Brown concentrating on the imagery, rather than any formal scheme. Each sentence is a collection of images, akin to the postman's bag of letters, and the device of accumulating impressions during the course of a typical day can be traced to James Joyce's Ulysses. However, this is the only point of comparison, for the poet has only one narrative standpoint, the recollections are entirely concerned with external 'reality', and the chronological progress through the day is not interrupted. Accordingly, the poem is essentially linear, in the 'realist' tradition.

As in The Death of Peter Esson, its metaphors and symbolism have their origins in everyday experience. All the people in the poem, including the postman, are recalled from a distant perspective, and their vitality is presented as much through aural, as visual imagery. The opening sentence, extending into the second stanza, evokes the early morning in terms of a 'timeless' past: 'Closes opening and shutting like legends'; the 'barbarous gulls' linking the scene with a primitive era. The rest of the poem is largely anecdotal, but care is taken to represent all the different facets of the community. Like the postman, fishermen embark on a voyage, and the reference to 'silver harvests' establishes a link with crofting which is strengthened when they return

with their catch:

'The boats drove furrows homeward, like ploughmen  
In blizzards of gulls.'

Gulls form one of the most persistent images in the poem and function as a link between many of its other features. Their bleak aspect corresponds to the vision as the fishermen set sail:

'...the tillers  
Of cold horizons leaned  
down the gull-gaunt tide'

and they attend the boats as an integral part of their daily ritual. Their cries are matched by the keening of the tinker and the 'dirge' of the 'fisher girl'.

Other forms of vocal expression are given equal prominence in Hamnavoe's daily ritual. A link is established between the 'slow grave jargon', chanted by the 'four bearded merchants,

... holy with greed' and the 'gale of songs' . .  
'the Kirk . . . went heaving through  
A tumult of roofs, freighted for heaven.'

The close proximity between the advent of Calvinism and the development of capitalism is humorously encapsulated into these lines, and the imagery emphasizes their mutual interdependence as the 'pillars' of local society. Their ethos is contrasted with the postman's socialism:

'And because, under equality's sun,  
All things were now to a common soiling',

while other images also encourage comparisons between different members of the community. The 'bearded merchants' have their counterparts in the Arctic Whaler where:

'Three blue elbows fell,  
regular as waves, from beards spumy with porter';

the 'crofter lass' corresponds to the 'fisher girl'. Their 'dirge' is appropriate to the 'grief by the shrouded nets', indicating the pervasive influence of the sea, whereas the dreams of the 'crofter lass' come to fruition with the 'lovers' who

' . . . lay under  
The buttered bannock of the moon.'

The future poet can be imagined among the 'boys with penny wands', and his 'seapink innocence' reflects the father's



role in sustaining a well-ordered community. As so often in Mackay Brown's verse (for example, The Drowning Brothers) the concluding lines suggest the creation of the poetic equivalent of a sculpture, moulding a permanent memorial out of the 'fire of images'.

The omitted stanza suggests that the stability of daily life in Hamnavoe was based on out-dated knowledge, yet it contains the most fundamental image in Mackay Brown's writing: the circle. It is associated with the 'blessings and soup plates', the 'Euclidian light', as well as the 'school bell', and expresses the idea of certainty, even if this can only be achieved at the cost of ignorance.

In commemorating his father, as in the case of Peter Esson, Mackay Brown evokes an era when the 'hierarchy of values' had not been undermined by scepticism or self-doubt. The compactness of the community was capable of yielding a sequence of images which could be organized into a poetic structure as cohesive as a conventional sonnet. It is this aspect the poet has attempted to recapture in his subsequent development, as he has sought to preserve the salient features of Orkney's past at a time when the community is threatened by increasing change.

A distant period of Orkney history provided the inspiration for Chapel Between Cornfield and Shore, though the location

is again Stromness (Hamnavoe, as it was formerly known). Based on the legend that there was a Catholic chapel in Stromness until the Reformation brought destruction, the poem's origins are again rooted in the 'realist' tradition, even if the historical 'facts' are conjectural. The use of the sonnet form is in keeping with Mackay Brown's belief that pre-Reformation Orkney society was well regulated, but in comparison with The Death of Peter Esson, the rhyme-scheme is more flexible, suggesting that life in the community was less circumscribed than under the domination of Calvinism. This is particularly apparent in the Sestet where the poem dispenses with the concluding rhymed couplet in favour of the following pattern - 9-13, 10-12, 11-14 - and relies on partial rhymes in two instances: 'flood'--'bread', 'dance'--'sins'. The 'false' rhyme of the last example introduces an element of parody to emphasize an aspect of pre-Reformation culture of which Knox violently disapproved. A ten-syllable line is employed as the basic rhythmic unit, but in conjunction with the less predictable rhyme, considerable fluidity is achieved. There is an element of sprung rhythm which contrasts strikingly with the regular progress of the earlier sonnet.

In other respects, the two sonnets follow a similar pattern. The division of the Octave in Chapel Between Cornfield and Shore reflects the transition from pre- to post-Reformation. The reference to Knox's 'wild hogmanay' is satirical, since

such festivities would have been as abhorrent to him as dancing. It also emphasizes the wanton nature of the destruction in that the 'solid round of stone and ritual' symbolizes both the stability of the pre-Reformation Church and the community it served. The second stanza begins by suggesting that Knox's influence will be swept away: 'The wave turns round'. This idea is developed in association with images drawn from the Passion story and from agriculture - a concept that Mackay Brown has expanded in Stations of the Cross (Fishermen with Ploughs) and the sequence From Stone to Thorn (Winterfold). Just as the rising corn 'after the crucifixion of the seed' symbolizes the resurrection of Christ, so the negative influence of the Reformation will be replaced by 'new ceremonies'. The word 'thrust' alludes to the agricultural process: 'Those good stones bleed' refers to the idea that some form of sacrifice is necessary before regeneration can occur - a theme Mackay Brown has explored in relation to the martyrdom of St Magnus, especially in his novel, Magnus.

The Sestet follows the convention of creating a strong contrast with the Octet by considering the implications of the legend for the twentieth-century Orkney community. Cast as a prayer, it extends the principle of combining the agricultural and Christian imagery to affirm that this may be an appropriate time to restore the chapel as a symbol of renewal. As compared with the four sentences of the Octave,

each focusing on a specific image and symmetrically arranged so that the first three lines are complemented by the last three, while the fourth and fifth lines counterbalance each other, the Sestet unfolds in a single sentence, reconstructing the imagery and symbolism of the Octave into a decisive vision of the Islands' future. It is a clear statement of Mackay Brown's conviction that the 'new ceremonies' will continue to reflect Orkney's agricultural and fishing traditions by forging a link between the rituals of daily life and what can be recovered of pre-Reformation Christianity. Accordingly, nat phenomena have their place in the ceremonial scheme:

' . . . the flood

Sounds all her lucent strings, its ocean dance',

while 'the hooked hands and harrowed heart of love' indicates that the influence of the sea is balanced by that of the soil. Whereas, in the Octave, the symmetry emphasizes the divisions that have affected the community, in the Sestet, it stresses an awareness of the unity of nature. The 'bronze bell sounds over ploughshare and creel' and the same images are used to create an allusion to the origins of Christianity:

'And sieged with hungry sins

A fisher priest offered our spindrift bread

With the hooked hands and harrowed heart of love.'

Chapel Between Cornfield and Shore is thus a re-working of The Masque of Bread, where a connection is established between the rituals of agriculture and the ceremonies of the Catholic Church. Besides juxtaposing images of good and evil, sacrifice and redemption, Mackay Brown's references to masques (and masks), as well as a 'mock Passion' prefigure Maxwell Davies's preoccupations of the later 1960s. More specifically, the image of a 'harlequin spring' in December Day: Hoy Sound corresponds to the 'false' resurrections which recur throughout Maxwell Davies's oeuvre - though not in his Mackay Brown settings. These are illustrations of the similarity of ideas which lay beneath the objective surface of Mackay Brown's writings, or the 'expressionism' of Maxwell Davies's music before their association began. There is also some evidence to suggest that the incidental details in Mackay Brown's verse have influenced the composer's adaptation of his subsequent texts. There are echoes of 'lucent strings' in the penultimate paragraph of Into the Labyrinth, based on the play, The Well: 'Perhaps in another age, from the secret sources, from the dark crystal pulse at the heart of the island, the healing current may rise circle on translucent circle - but now, the source is choked.

The symmetrical construction of Loaves and Fishes, whereby the final section of the collection mirrors the first

thematically, as well as structurally, is reproduced in many of the individual items. Poems based on a three-verse structure are obvious examples of a tendency to establish relationships between small and large forms. Formally, the opening sonnet of Part I is balanced by the penultimate poem of Part III, but thematically, the 'three Mary's' of Daffodils fulfils the ultimate transformation of The Old Women. Above all, it foreshadows the opening poem of The Year of the Whale: The Death of Ally Flett a formal tribute to a local fisherman involving an unusually strict organization of rhyme and line lengths.

The Year of the Whale consolidates Mackay Brown's earlier poetry collections by concentrating on local 'characters' and subject-matter. The book contains a few broadly religious poems which tend to establish the serious tone of the collection; a couple of items deal with historical, or contemporary events of universal significance, but the majority are concerned with everyday incidents, or the perception of nature. They are sometimes written from the standpoint of tinkers or fishermen (hinting at local speech), so that whereas Loaves and Fishes is ultimately a metaphysical collection, The Year of the Whale is almost entirely 'realistic', set firmly in a rural environment, permeated by the sea. There are few references to legend, or to the world of the supernatural, and the use of symbolism is less pervasive. The 'timeless' quality of these poems is not

dependent upon the notion of an ontological realm, but on the fact that the events described could have occurred at any time during a period of hundreds of years.

## Section 2 - Maxwell Davies's Early Development.

Maxwell Davies's early development was equally consistent during his first ten years of composition as he consolidated technique, and much of the resulting music has an austere detachment, roughly equivalent to Mackay Brown's verse. However, while David Roberts provides a detailed account from the technical standpoint, this needs to be considered alongside the composer's aesthetic preoccupations in order to fully understand the tensions which precipitated the violent changes in his music during the 1960s. At the risk of generalization, whereas the emergence of the 'Movement' poets in the 1950s tended to mitigate the more extreme manifestations of 'modernism', so that British verse followed a comparatively stable path, based on the principle of free construction, the influence of the Continental avant-garde on British music provoked a crisis in which the tenets of 'total serialism' began to be questioned as a viable form of composition.

Maxwell Davies was among the young British composers who originally endorsed the serial method, and since it

generated a great deal of hostility in the main music colleges, this involved adopting an anti-'establishment' attitude. In the first three Chapters of his thesis, David Roberts outlined the composer's debt to serialism, culminating in a detailed analysis of Prolation, illustrating Maxwell Davies's most thorough-going application of serial technique. Yet in comparison with his Continental contemporaries, Maxwell Davies was already evincing an unorthodox approach. The Trumpet Sonata included various forms of hierarchical organization of serial structures, together with the strict permutation of pitch-class sets. Tentative links were also established between the serial manipulation of pitch and duration, but freely constructed material was introduced, and there were even triadic harmonies! These procedures were developed in the Five Piano Pieces', Opus 2, with the elimination of pitch repetition by means of the 'first only sieve', the introduction of transposition cycles and pitch rotation. In addition, the derivation of durational schemes from the organization of pitch-classes was extended. A further extension involved the hierarchical arrangement of 'common order number diads', foreshadowing the later construction of 'diadic squares' (see Chapter 6). Moreover, although Prolation constituted one of the most tangible manifestations of Maxwell Davies's studies with Goffredo Petrassi, the inclusion of bell-ringing formulae represented a departure from the repertoire of 'devices' favoured by Continental composers. The next three



chapters of Roberts's thesis are primarily concerned with the composer's expansion of these technical procedures: combination of 'sets' and amalgamation of transposition cycles to generate a 'third-level structure' (Alma Redemptoris Mater); extension of the principle of transposition cycles, 'sets' presented in both sieved and unsieved form, derivations of durations from pitch and interval classes (St Michael Sonata); 'coupled pairs' as primary serial unit, modifications to transposition square ('Ricercar and doubles on 'To Many A Well'). The fact that plainchant appears as source material in Alma Redemptoris Mater and the St Michael Sonata is also mentioned, together with the ambiguity of the respective programme notes. In the case of the former, it is pointed out that analyses were based on the false assumption that the work was derived from Dunstable's motet, Alma Redemptoris Mater; concerning the latter, differences of interpretation arose from the wide range of historical and technical references, which frequently characterize the composer's writing about his music. Yet while Roberts stresses the significance of the programme note for St Michael Sonata as a summary of Maxwell Davies's compositional methods, he does not link the introduction of plainsong with the infusion of a wide range of religious symbolism, even though this is an important indication that the composer's technical and aesthetic concerns were beginning to merge. The libretto of Taverner, on which Maxwell Davies embarked in 1956, raised further

issues that could only be adequately addressed by ascribing equal importance to symbolic and aesthetic questions as technical considerations. In his account of Maxwell Davies' technical development, Roberts generally avoids the vocal works until his analysis of Revelation and Fall in Chapter 8, but they exercised a pervasive influence in that the need to combine a greater expressive range with the creation of large scale structures demanded a more flexible approach, exemplified by the growing repertoire of transforming techniques. The inclusion of decorative and melismatic material in Alma Redemptoris Mater coincided with the initial appearance of plainsong in Maxwell Davies's work, and this aspect of his style was developed during his tenure as Director of Music at Cirencester Grammar School (1959/1962), where it was encouraged by the need to produce a substantial vocal output, setting texts in Latin and Medieval English. Such works as O Magnum Mysterium were of pioneering importance in the field of creative music-making in schools, including the incorporation of improvisatory elements into the instrumental sonatas. They were also an indication of the composer's early interest in music education, and although this aspect figured less prominently during the later 1960s, one of Maxwell Davies's most important educational scores, The Shepherds' Calendar, dates from 1965. The consistency of his music for schools contrasts strikingly with the various changes of style which have characterised the rest of his output, and consequently it is hardly surprising that his

educational work, involving the wider community in addition to local schools, has received considerable priority as he has reintegrated the various elements of his style throughout the 'Orkney' period. However, as the texts of the earliest educational works were drawn from Church sources, and were devotional or liturgical in character, their expressive range was comparatively limited. Consequently, as work progressed on the libretto of Taverner, it became clear that an entirely different style of vocal writing would be required. An important component of this stemmed from the composer's arrangement of a large portion of Monteverdi's Vespers of 1610 for school performance. The nature of the Vespers texts set by Monteverdi, including passages from The Song of Solomon, encouraged a florid style of vocal writing, analogous to his madrigals, and a close study of these enabled Maxwell Davies to approach poetry of a wider emotional range. The result was the Five Leopardi Fragments, for soprano, contralto and eight players (six wind instruments, harp and cello), his first setting of secular words and his only non-dramatic vocal composition - apart from settings of sacred texts - prior to the advent of George Mackay Brown. The choice of two singers was undoubtedly influenced by the duets in the Vespers, and a more immediate precedent was provided by Alexander Goehr's cantata, The Deluge (1958). Yet the principal reason was almost certainly the composer's need for two vocal lines to accommodate the expressive potential of Leopardi's verse. The

tension inherent in such lines as: 'Mi diedi tutto alla gioia barbara e fremebonda della disperazione' ('And I gave myself up entirely to the wild and furious joy of despair') is distilled through the decorative melismas of the voice parts and embellished instrumental accompaniment. The intensity of the lyricism can be gauged by comparing the austere writing for the wind instruments with the mellifluous style of Alma Redemptoris Mater, scored for a similar ensemble, but the music had not reached the realms of 'expressionism', where the composer felt obliged to extend his use of parody from its Medieval and Renaissance meaning, involving pre-existing material, to its modern meaning, with its satirical connotations. Bayan Northcott has observed that models for Maxwell Davies 'tend to be starting-points for transformation, not only of stylistic surface, but in the ... tradition of taking a pre-existing structure and changing it detail by detail into something new'.<sup>10</sup> The fact that, by the early 1960s, compositions were apt to be based on more than one 'model' exacerbated the tension which was becoming increasingly evident in the composer's music. The String Quartet (1961) is a good example of the earliest phase of this development. On the one hand, it exhibits 'symphonic' characteristics: the whole work is based on the material announced in the opening bars; there are allusions to a four-movement structure; and even the equivalent of a 'tonic'- 'dominant' relationship, though in a manner typical of Maxwell Davies, this is based on the interval of a tritone

(A-E flat). In fact, although the structural plan is reversed, the opening adagio of the Quartet hints at the Mahlerian breadth which the composer later achieved in the penultimate section of the Second Taverner Fantasia and Worldes Blis. At the same time, the String Quartet can be interpreted in terms of variation form, with the adagio being based on twelve repetitions of the 'cantus firmus' whose pitches are rotated so that each forms the starting-point of a new transposition. An element of variation form is equally apparent in the remaining sections of the work, which present the same harmonic material in an entirely different guise. The technique is roughly akin to the Baroque 'double': an extension of the embellishments which had become increasingly prominent during the course of the adagio. Moreover, the structural relationship between the two halves of the Quartet prefigure the method of construction favoured by Maxwell Davies in many of his most ambitious works, including Taverner, Black Pentecost, The Lighthouse and Resurrection, and it is notable that in a number of his stageworks, the principal character is associated with a 'dark double'. Indeed, diabolic symbolism is one of the chief manifestations of Maxwell Davies's preoccupation with Medieval thought, and is not confined to the genre of music-theatre. The fact that the tritone fulfils a central role in the composer's harmonic thinking means that diabolical influences permeate all his music. Likewise, his constant recourse to plainsong as source material means that his

harmonic language invariably exhibits modal characteristics. During the 1960s, all these elements were brought into sharper focus by the need to ensure that the subject-matter of Taverner would be given adequate musical expression. The result was a change of emphasis, to a more dramatic style, which is immediately evident from a comparison between the Monteverdi-inspired works (String Quartet, Leopardi Fragments and Sinfonia) and their successors (First Fantasia on an 'In Nomine' of John Taverner, Veni Sancte Spiritus, Second Fantasia on an 'In Nomine' of John Taverner). The austerity of 'Veni Sancte Spiritus' was superseded by the 'symphonic' breadth of the 'Second Fantasia', but this provoked a further conflict, between the 'classical' and 'romantic' aspects of the composer's creative personality. Furthermore, the need to achieve maximum dramatic impact meant not only simplifying the structural outlines of his larger works, but also discarding the most extreme forms of serial manipulation, whether those associated with European composers, or the American variety, based on Milton Babbitt's theory of hexachordal combinatoriality, which Maxwell Davies encountered while studying at Princeton. The intensity that Maxwell Davies was able to generate from a more extensive and radical use of parody undoubtedly reflected his response to these questions, but the sudden eruption of his style into the works by which he is best known almost certainly involved other factors. These were obviously related to his choice of texts, as well

as the underlying themes linking the works surrounding Taverner, yet a completely adequate explanation is likely to be more complex, possibly including aspects of the composer's personal life which may have to be left to posterity. The increasing turbulence was accompanied by an expansion of Maxwell Davies's output into new genres, and this coincided with a similar, though unrelated, broadening of Mackay Brown's style. In addition, while the fact that Maxwell Davies's use of parody has become less obtrusive in recent years may be another legacy of Mackay Brown's influence, the poet has also not been averse to employing this feature in conjunction with pre-existing sources as a satirical device.

Section 3 - 'A Spell for Greencorn' and 'Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé'.

Parallels between Mackay Brown's A Spell for Greencorn and Maxwell Davies's Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé' are all the more remarkable, given that they were unaware of each other's work and were apparently pursuing entirely different artistic objectives. In both instances, a transformational scheme is devised in order to illustrate historical change (see Appendix 1), and in each case, the successive stages of the metamorphosis are associated with increasing levels of corruption. In A Spell for Greencorn, the focus is

provided by Storm Kolson, the legendary 'Blind Fiddler' of Maxwell Davies's song-cycle to words drawn from an appendix to the play. In Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé', it is the famous 15th-century French chanson of the title. Both use sources which are either incomplete, or partially fictitious. The sources for A Spell for Greencorn include an account of a witch trial, apparently dating from the 17th century, and a notebook, reputedly in the hand of Kolson, but both written by Mackay Brown. The source of Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé' is a fragment of an 'Agnus Dei' setting discovered in the Vatican Library.

The theme of betrayal is of fundamental importance in both works. In Scene 5 of A Spell for Greencorn, Storm Kolson reappears during the ritual burning of a girl he had previously seduced, yet he fails to intercede for her. The spoken text of Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé' comprises the Biblical account of Judas's betrayal of Christ. Finally, in each case, a form of resurrection proceeds from the concluding stages of degeneration. The closing scene of the play involves a Social Security official in a parody of the welfare state, symbolizing 'progress'. The 'Last Supper' is enacted, and the confrontation between the fiddler's art and 'progress' embodies the resurrection. Maxwell Davies's composition ends with a parody of a 19th-century hymn tune, representing the ultimate corruption of Christianity, against which the text is declaimed and fragmented. A 'mock'



resurrection is celebrated in the concluding bars.

Despite their underlying similarity, the very different impact created by the two works is not confined to the fact that one is a play and the other an 'abstract' composition. The main differences relate to the contrasting cultural backgrounds of the two works. Mackay Brown was responding to a context in which the cultural identity of the Orkney community was being threatened, but in which the importance of the Islands' past - their legends and aural tradition as well as their history - was still recognized. Maxwell Davies was reacting to a more fundamental cultural upheaval in which all aspects of tradition were under assault.

The 1960s saw the most radical expressions of the 'modernist' aesthetic in both music and literature, as attempts were made to revolutionize the cultural, political and social fabric in most of the major urban centres throughout the Western World. A concerted attempt to break with the past was made in many areas of intellectual activity, leading to a debate about the concept of a 'work of art' and its relevance to society. These questions were central to Maxwell Davies, whose opera, Taverner, was concerned with an equally profound upheaval during the period of the Reformation, so that his consideration of the Tudor composer's relation to society had a direct bearing on his personal experience. Maxwell Davies was unable to accept the new orthodoxy of 'total serialism',

postulated by the composers of the post-war avant-garde, not least because it proved inadequate with regard to the expressive requirements of his libretto. The complex symbolism involved, with its allusions to the Bible, as well as many aspects of Medieval and Renaissance culture, raised issues which could not be confined to word-setting insofar as they extended into the realm of dramatic presentation. It was necessary to combine documentary 'realism', based on a detailed study of the Court of King Henry VIII, the dissolution of the monasteries, heresy and witchcraft trials, etc., with psychological 'realism', reflecting the inner conflict of the main protagonist. As Gabriel Josipovici has remarked, Maxwell Davies's problems were exacerbated by the fact that his adherence to the Austro-German 'symphonic' tradition prevented him from achieving a form of stylization which would distance the audience to the extent that the question of singing what could easily be spoken would not arise.<sup>11</sup> He also mentioned a discrepancy in the composer's approach to time, observing that several years passed during the course of the opera, while every opportunity is taken 'to discard continuity altogether and to turn stage time into internal rather than historical time'.<sup>12</sup> Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé' proved to be the most radical extension of this preoccupation with time, but in this respect, Mackay Brown's interpretation of his source material in A Spell for Greencorn proved no less radical.

### A Spell for Greencorn.

The rural setting of the play and its close ties with the ballad tradition encouraged the creation of a 'fabulous framework',<sup>13</sup> enabling fantastic events to be presented in conjunction with naturalistic dialogue. The technique is established in the opening scene, with its reference to a variant of the miracle of loaves and fishes, and a more distant allusion to the mysterious events of the Nativity. An idyllic past is created, involving the conversion of seafarers to crofters. The scene is roughly equivalent to Section 2 of Fishermen with Ploughs, dealing with the settlement of the Norsemen in Rackwick and their acceptance of Christianity. Throughout the scene, the notion of transformation is paramount, not least in the comparison of ploughing with burying the dead (page 10), and the fact that the burial of John Barleycorn with which it ends evokes the phenomenon of regeneration in all its manifestations.

The events of the next four scenes are precisely located in Orkney history, but raise issues that are not confined to a specific time or place. Although set more than a century later, their subject-matter is concerned with the impact of the Reformation on the Islands, including the role of the artist in society. Scene 2 makes it clear that an attempt has been made to eradicate the old customs and rituals. The Factor functions as a symbol of law imposed by a distant

Government. He regards the fiddle as an instrument of the Devil, and only allows the midsummer fire to be held in the belief that its failure to end the drought and save the corn will convince the islanders that it is 'a relic of . . . superstition' (page 19). As in Maxwell Davies's Taverner, the Factor substitutes his own brand of superstition for the older variety and imposes a 'reformed' religion upon the people with a good deal of hypocrisy. As in the opera, the distinction between 'appearance' and 'reality' is one of the main themes, but the play does not restrict the issue to questions of religious doctrine or diplomacy. It is suggested in Scene 1 by the various reactions to Brother Cormack's 'miracle' of transforming stones into fish, and by means of the multiple viewpoint, the main events of the next four scenes are presented from several perspectives. The Factor's bureaucratic outlook is contrasted with the simplicity of Sigrid Tomson's faith, which proves to be her downfall, when he attributes a number of unexplained phenomena to her witchcraft. Storm Kolson represents a direct comparison of the old tradition - its music, dance and ceremonial rituals - with the puritanical features of Calvinism, in which the mysteries celebrating the local wisdom and folklore have been banished in favour of laws reflecting the concept of predestination. Since the abolition of the old Christian 'truths' in the name of 'progress', Storm Kolson's role as poet and fiddler has assumed greater importance for his art functions as an

alternative to the lost faith: 'The Word was imprisoned, between blackboards, and chained and padlocked, in the pulpit of the kirk - impossible for it to get free among the ploughs and the nets, that season of famine. Therefore, the lesser word, the fiddle, the poem, the rune, must work the miracle of bread' (page 90). The sound which only the fiddler can hear symbolizes the blight that has descended upon the community, emphasizing its destructive influence on both the corn and the spiritual welfare of the island. It also refers to the degree of insight which the creative artist is traditionally thought to possess, and the fact that this often leads to his being misunderstood by the rest of the community. Storm Kolson's anarchic behaviour constitutes another variant of this theme.

The 'voyage' motif is also introduced in Scene 2: 'He went round an island from shipwreck to ale-house to cornfield', etc. 'and he took his fiddle with him, to clean the island with music' (page 84). The fiddler's 'journey' enables the author to portray the island as an expanding community in comparison with Scene 1, when the decision was taken to cultivate the land. Scene 2 culminates in the midsummer celebrations in which Storm Kolson's new reel, played on his rescued fiddle, revives memories of the ritual dances with which the lighting of the midsummer fire was traditionally accompanied. The Scene ends with Sigrid announcing that the corn had been saved, thereby confirming that the ancient

ceremonies, of which her own seduction formed an integral part, had been correctly conducted.

The 'voyage' theme is developed in Scene 3, as is the idea of transformation: 'The whole island's tossing with gold . . . They said a while back it was going to be a bad harvest' (page 34). The scene is entrusted to the tinkers and in keeping with their previous appearances, they provide an impressionistic account of some of the principal events, allowing the spectator to fill in the necessary detail. This is particularly true with regard to the disappearance of Storm Kolson, which is related by Sarah in Tinker's Song:

'There stood three men at the black furrow  
and one was clad in yellow'. (page 32).

As at the end of Scene 1, Mackay Brown draws on a ballad from the oral tradition to underline a crucial stage of the island's history, and from the chapter on lore in An Orkney Tapestry, it is clear that both ballads are associated with a folk tale concerning Storm Kolson's capture by 'the good trows', in order to ensure a rich harvest, resulting in his disappearance from the Orkney community for many years. The tale is fully developed in both the short story and children's opera entitled The Two Fiddlers. Its link with the burial mound of Maeshowe means that it also forms part of the background to Mackay Brown's short story, Stone Poems'

(A Calendar of Love), an imaginative account of how seven poets carved inscriptions on the walls of the tomb, as well as Maxwell Davies's Stone Litany, an orchestral work incorporating settings of the runes in the original Norse (see Chapter 6). Mackay Brown's exploration of this legend in various genres creates a strong impulse towards stylistic integration by establishing thematic links between different works. Yet it is instructive to note that Maxwell Davies's independent adoption of a similar procedure with regard to the Taverner related compositions did not achieve a comparable unity, although they shared many of the composer's technical preoccupations of the later 1960s. The explanation resides primarily in the fact that Maxwell Davies had not discovered a consistent body of literature of a relatively traditional cast, but was responding to different varieties of 'experimental' writing.

However, as the second half of A Spell for Greencorn makes clear, other factors were involved than a more conventional approach to word-setting, for Mackay Brown has achieved a greater degree of authorial detachment in his handling of similar subject-matter than Maxwell Davies in Taverner. This does not imply a failure to engage the interest and sympathy of the spectator concerning the victim of the 'trial' and public execution, any more than in his equally detached rendering of a similar event in 'Witch' (A Calendar of Love). On the contrary, Sigrid's innocence is

unequivocally affirmed by the fact that she dies before the public burning can be carried out (another feature shared with the story):

'Clerk: This is most irregular. I have never known it to happen before'.

The element of mystery thus introduced transcends the 'realism' of the vengeful crowd enthusiastically enjoying a public spectacle and restores the play to the 'fabulous realm' established in the first three scenes. Although on one level the event symbolizes the return to superstition at a time when art and faith have been banished from the Islands, it is also one of the many forms of sacrificial ritual enacted throughout Mackay Brown's oeuvre, and a direct counterpart of Storm Kolson's disappearance. It embodies the idea, explicitly stated in Magnus that society periodically demands some form of sacrifice to ensure its continuation, and the structure of the play reflects those phases of Orkney history when the survival of the old traditions would seem to depend on some form of miracle or sacrifice. Hence the allusion to the fable of the Saint who transformed stones into fish at the close of Scene 5, underlying the significance of the preceding tableau. The allusion also functions as 'preparation' for the final scene.

After establishing that Scene 6 takes place in the twentieth



century on the day of a typical Orkney agricultural fair, historical time is finally abandoned as the main characters of the play are drawn together. As the chief protagonist is the 'Blind Fiddler', the technique employed is analogous to that of a 'recapitulation' of the principal motifs in a musical composition. There is also a strong feeling of dramatic contrast as the 'realism' of the Social Security tent, plus the surrounding booths, is gradually superseded by a symbolic sacrifice, based on a recreation of the 'Last Supper'. Part of the 'musical' effect stems from the accumulation of appropriate references both to earlier events in the play, as well as the Passion story, prior to the final metamorphosis. A voice offers 'thirty bob for any man who will stay three rounds with 'Battling Agnew'' (see also The Shining Ones in Loaves and Fishes). Other voices refer to a variety of rituals associated with fairgrounds. Above all, the 'meal', symbolizing the Last Supper, is interpreted as anarchic behaviour by the Social Security clerk who personifies the 'establishment'. He embodies the concept of 'progress', while the fairground can be regarded as a parody of post-Reformation history. Its distractions - diverting attention from 'reality' - function as a metaphor for the way the corpus of knowledge, built up over the past five hundred years, has obscured the fundamental issue of man's relationship to nature.

The rest of the scene is dominated by the 'Blind Fiddler's'

speech. His naivety is suggested by Sal: 'He always makes that same speech when he's drunk, bloody gibberish. He's got it off by heart' (page 65). Yet it expresses the author's conviction that art and religion should be as simple as possible: 'man and the earth take corruption one from the other, they being inseparable dust,' and in the absence of faith 'art - what ye call poem, pattern, dance. One cold act of beauty (in default of sanctity) might yet flush the hill with ripeness' (page 62).

In view of the significance attached to the breaking of the fiddle in Eight Songs for a Mad King, it is noteworthy that the climax of this scene, involving the discovery of the word Resurrection, is marked by the breaking of the last string of the 'Blind Fiddler's' instrument. In both instances, death is symbolized, but in A Spell for Greencorn, it fits into the pattern of transformation described in the 'Blind Fiddler's' speech. His narrative recapitulates the disappearance of Storm Kolson, and in order to secure the continuation of the eternal pattern of regeneration, Freya is symbolically transformed into Sigrid. At the end of the play it is made clear that in the final transformation, Sigrid's hair becomes new fiddle strings, so that the march of 'progress' can be halted: 'There's one thing you and I must do yet, fiddle, we must break the machines' (Page 66).

Notwithstanding the quality of the writing, the ideas on

which Mackay Brown's faith is built fit uneasily into the context of late twentieth-century culture. Nevertheless, their importance for Maxwell Davies can be gauged from the fact that Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé' arose from an attempt to reconcile similar subject-matter to a much less clearly defined religious standpoint in Taverner. Moreover, Maxwell Davies's acknowledgement of the importance of the Cyclops Episode in James Joyce's Ulysses as the structural model of Missa Super 'L'Homme armé' points to a literary influence shared with Mackay Brown.

#### Section 4 - The Impact of 'Ulysses' on Mackay Brown and Maxwell Davies.

Stuart Gilbert's analytical study of the novel provides many valuable clues as to its perennial fascination for both poet and composer. Not the least significant aspect of Mackay Brown's influence on Maxwell Davies has been his own example in absorbing some of James Joyce's key ideas and even techniques, modifying them and reducing their scale of reference so that they reflect the life of a small community - its history and mythology. The use of the multiple viewpoint is an obvious instance, but more immediately, A Spell for Greencorn incorporates the notion of metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls - one of the

most prominent leitmotifs in Ulysses. Indeed, much of Mackay Brown's output embodies the theory of history propounded by the Italian philosopher, Vico (the inspirational source of Finnegans Wake), suitably distilled in order that it might be reconciled with his Catholic view of the world. Stuart Gilbert's outline of the theory states that 'there is a recurrent cycle in human 'progress', as in the movement of the stars. Societies begin, continue, and have an end according to fixed and universal laws. Every nation passes through three ages - the divine, the heroic, and the human. The prelude and aftermath of each cycle is complete disintegration, brought about by the indiscipline and egoism of the concluding stages of the 'human' regime.

The discoveries of the preceding civilized epoch are almost obliterated and man reverts to a brutish state, till once again he hears the voice of God, the hammer-hurler, speaking in the thunder and re-learns the beginning of wisdom. The goal of human effort is the resolution of the conflict between good and evil; after each epoch of dissolution and reconstruction, a fragment of the advance gained by the spent wave is conserved, for there is a slowly rising tide in human history and the struggle is not nought availing'.<sup>14</sup> The link with Maxwell Davies is established through the theory's distinct affinities with the mystical concepts of 'Manvantara' and 'Pralaya', 'alternate periods of activity and repose',<sup>15</sup> frequently alluded to in Ulysses and which

the composer would have encountered during research for his dissertation on rhythm in Indian music. Such ideas are frequently associated with Mr. Bloom, and particularly Stephen Dedalus, and in this connection it is worth noting that as with most of the principal characters of his own works, Maxwell Davies appears to have identified closely with some aspects of Dedalus, especially those facets resembling the author's creative persona. The isolation of key passages in Gilbert's analysis of 'Ulysses' provides some useful illustrations of the way in which Stephen functions as a 'mediator' of Joyce's ideas for the composer.

Maxwell Davies has often cited the following extract from The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man as his 'artistic credo': 'Rhythm' said Stephen 'is the first formal aesthetic relation of part to part in any aesthetic whole or of an aesthetic whole to its part or parts or of any part to the aesthetic whole of which it is a part'<sup>16</sup>. Elsewhere, the author's quest for artistic truth, conveyed through the words of Stephen, is paralleled by the composer's search for religious truth, expressed through words sung by John Taverner: 'I must look it out afresh, a new reality, by scorching reason. God is my strength.' (Act I, Scene 2).

This is comparable with the following entry in Dedalus diary which forms the concluding lines of The Portrait: 'I go to

encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience  
and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated  
conscience of my race . . . . Old father, old artificer,  
stand me now and ever in good stead'.<sup>17</sup>

Maxwell Davies has also referred to Stephen's notion of God as 'a noise in the streets' on more than one occasion, and Gilbert's book contains a critical assessment of Joyce's technique of the interior monologue which could be applied equally well to the various levels of musical activity embedded in a characteristic Maxwell Davies composition: 'The necessity of recording the flow of consciousness by means of words and phrases compels the writer to depict it as a continuous horizontal line, like a line of melody. But even a casual examination of our inner consciousness shows us that this presentation is essentially false. We do not think on one plane, but on many planes at once. It is wrong to suppose that we follow only one train of thought at a time; there are several trains of thought, one above another. We are generally more aware, more completely conscious, of thoughts which take form on the higher plane; but we are also aware, more or less obscurely, of a stream of thoughts on the lower levels. We attend or own to one series of reflections or images but we are all the time aware of other series which are unrolling themselves on obscurer planes of consciousness.

Sometimes there are interferences, eruptions, unforeseen contacts between these series. A stream of thought from a lower level suddenly usurps the bed of the stream which flowed on the highest plane of consciousness. By an effort of will-power we may be able to divert it; it subsides but does not cease to exist.<sup>18</sup>

Although this passage was designed to illustrate the inadequacy of the interior monologue as a technique for presenting the stream of consciousness, it is pertinent to the majority of Maxwell Davies's scores of the later 1960s, as well as his subsequent development. On the one hand, the following, from later in the passage, highlights the central issue of serial composition: 'such a method gives an entirely false idea of the complexity of our mental make-up, for it is the way the light falls upon each element, with a greater or a less clarity, that indicates the relative importance for ourselves, our lives and acts, of each of the several thought streams. But in the silent monologue, as transposed into words by Joyce, each element seems of equal importance, the subsidiary and the essential themes are treated as equivalent and an equal illumination falls upon those parts which were in reality brightly lit up and those which remained in the dark background of thought.'<sup>19</sup> On the other, the whole of the extract indicates why Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé' should be primarily concerned with the structure of the Cyclops Episode, rather than with an attempt

to respond directly to the text.

Missa Super 'L'homme Armé'.

The fact that, according to the 'composer's note' in the score, Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé' grew out of a 'completion of incomplete sections of an anonymous 15th-century Mass' means that Maxwell Davies had turned his attention from texts concerned with questions of doctrine to the central rite of the Catholic Church. Yet as the work proliferated, it gave rise to a more violent reaction to the issue of betrayal than almost anything in Taverner and proved the antithesis of the reconciliation of traditions, musical and theological, tentatively suggested by the final scene of the opera. The systematic corruption of the original fragment is in keeping with the political emphasis of the Cyclops Episode and the fact that it is in terms of pol that the theme of betrayal is explored throughout the novel. The colloquial nature of the text, in which slang is a prominent feature - 'I'll brain that bloody Jewman for using the holy name . . . . I'll crucify him so I will. Give us that biscuit box here' - as well as the technique of gigantism on which the episode is based, determine the character of Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé'. Rather than attempting a setting of an appropriate passage, Maxwell Davies reverts to the liturgical Latin of his earlier compositions, but infuses the comedy of the Joycean text with sinister implications. The atmosphere is



similar to that conveyed by Mackay Brown in his short story, Master Halcrow, Priest (A Calendar of Love - 1967):

'There was lately a man came to the town of Kirkwall that preached under the sky like a friar, his text, the scarlet woman and Antichrist ... This man was not licensed by the Bishops yet many heard him. There was shrieking, babbling, seeing of visions and speaking in tongues. Men sobbed and declared their sins openly in the streets. The Bishop took no steps to control this false pretender to primitive truth, who presently went north to the outer islands and on into Shetland. The blasphemous clowning came to an end, yet why did this thing, while it lasted, fill me with such dread, as if it was the shadow of an immense, on-coming evil?'

However, whereas Mackay Brown's story is unequivocal in its Catholic standpoint, enlisting the sympathy of the reader by casting the chief protagonist as narrator, Maxwell Davies<sup>21</sup> employs the technique of magnifying 'a passing idea' in conjunction with the original L'Homme Armé melody and declaimed extracts from St Luke's account of the events leading to the Crucifixion to create a parallel, illustrating the extent to which the meaning of both has been distorted beyond recognition. The method is analogous to the 'stream of consciousness' technique outlined above and the notion of 'foregrounding' discussed by Tony Tanner in his survey of the<sup>22</sup> post-war American novel.

The various changes of perspective reflect the narrative structure of the Cyclops Episode in surprising detail. The tale related by Joyce's anonymous narrator is in constant danger of being submerged under the endless banter of tavern conversation he describes. His account is also interrupted by a series of more extended diversions which constitute the main element of gigantism in the Episode. In some instances, these are literal, assuming fantastic proportions as in the 'portrait' of The Citizen, or the transformation of the throwing of the biscuit tin into an earthquake. In others, the element of size arises from the inflation of an incidental idea. A reading of the hangman's letter initiates a general conversation on the subject which is subsequently expanded into an account of the execution of an Irish Nationalist, metamorphosed into a public spectacle (compare Scene 5 of A Spell for Greencorn). The theme of Irish Nationalism also underpins a conversation about sport, leading to a 'report' of a 'discussion' concerning '... the importance of physical culture as understood in Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome and Ancient Ireland', culminating in the description of an epic prize fight. It forms the starting-point of an account of a wedding, written in the style of provincial journalism, and is one of the inspirational sources of the many religious puns, including a distorted version of the Anglican Creed.

Maxwell Davies's compositional thought was dominated by

parody during the late 1960s. The preference for invertible counterpoint and the manipulation of 'sets' through a vast number of procedures involving various forms of transposition or transformation, to create several levels of musical discourse, was deliberately distorted by means of intensely expressive vocal and instrumental writing. Ironical, or satirical effects were created by deriving conflicting types of material from a single source. This often resulted in the creation of a 'dialectic' between alternating sequences, symbolizing the difficulty of distinguishing 'truth' and 'falsity', but the same underlying idea could also be explored in terms of confused identities.

In the Cyclops Episode, Mr Bloom's identity is seen from contrasting points of view. Further complications arise over a misinterpretation of his behaviour. Mr Bloom regards himself as Irish, but his fellow drinkers consider him to be Jewish - a fact of which he is continually reminded throughout the novel. Taken in conjunction with the unspoken assumption that Jews are mean, their opinion is 'confirmed' by the mistaken belief that Bloom has successfully backed an 'outsider' in the Ascot Gold Cup, but is keeping this a secret in order to avoid paying for a round of drinks. The technique of gigantism tends to emphasize the farcical aspect of the ensuing action, but a vein of seriousness emerges when Bloom responds to his 'persecutors' by declaring that Christ was a Jew - a retort regarded as blasphemous by 'The

Citizen'.

Parody is of crucial importance in this Episode, not least in presenting contentious subject-matter, and in view of the variety of its manifestations, it is hardly surprising that it should attract Maxwell Davies's attention. Since parody is implied in the notion of using pre-existing material as a creative model, it can be argued that, as traditionally understood, it is rarely absent from Maxwell Davies' music. Likewise, it pervades the entire structure of Ulysses. The diversity of its other uses was determined by the unique circumstances of composer and author respectively, though in each case, much of the stimulus appears to have been generated by an ambivalent attitude to the Catholic Church. James Joyce felt obliged to live in exile in order to distance himself from the stifling effects of Irish Catholicism, while Maxwell Davies's preoccupation with Taverner had an equally disturbing emotional effect which needed to be tempered by a measure of detachment. Both regarded humour as an essential component of their work, but Maxwell Davies laid greater stress on its shock value to expose the irrational side of human nature, with its capacity for total destruction. This theme is given its fullest operatic treatment by Hans Werner Henze, with whom Maxwell Davies shares a good deal in common, in The Bassarids (Libretto by Auden and Kallman),<sup>23</sup> but it is equally evident in Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé', where the increasing

nihilism of the music accompanying the recitation of the text represents one of the composer's attempts to confront 'the Antichrist . . . within my own self',<sup>24</sup> which Gabriel Josipovici describes as 'the triumph, if not of Christ, then at least of that creative principle of which Christ, according to Rose Parrowe, is the root ... The articulation of the hero's failure, despair, and disintegration, reveals the ultimate triumph of art, of the human over the inanimate'.<sup>25</sup> The work also reflects the influence of the whole novel on Maxwell Davies's thought, particularly the anarchy of the Circe episode.

Another important theme uniting Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé' with the Cyclops Episode concerns the manner in which questions of identity are handled. Maxwell Davies's most extensive development of this theme in Blind Man's Buff was<sup>26</sup> inspired by Georg Buchner's play, Leonce und Lena, but its earlier appearance as one of the key issues of Taverner may well have been influenced by Joyce's example, in view of the close parallel between the confusion surrounding people's names in the Cyclops Episode and that associated with the identity of the original popular melody of Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé'. In the Cyclops Episode, two principal methods are employed to blur individual identity. The scene in the tavern is punctuated by several extensive lists of names, invariably infused with an element of parody, either because they all refer to trees, are exaggeratedly 'foreign'

in character, or are distortions of aristocratic titles. Gilbert observes that this practice may have been derived from the Catholic Liturgy for Good Friday, in which prayers are offered for a long list of individuals. He ties this in with Joyce's alternative procedure, involving the changing, misattribution, or exclusion of names, pointing out that at the conclusion of the prayers, the Jews are singled out as a separate entity, and that the congregation is not asked to genuflect 'because the Jews bend the knee to Christ in mockery'.<sup>27</sup> Owing to the fact that Mr Bloom is an assumed name, it is deliberately omitted from the closing pages of the Episode, possibly symbolizing his anonymity as an 'outsider' in Catholic Ireland. It would be wrong to press too many comparisons between Maxwell Davies's use of L'Homme Armé and Joyce's treatment of Mr. Bloom in the Cyclops Episode, but the parallels cannot be ignored.

The use of popular tunes as the basis of Mass settings meant introducing a secular tradition into the Catholic Liturgy. The incorporation of such 'alien' material into the Catholic ritual provoked widespread disapproval, and was one of the contributory causes of the Reformation, so that Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé' synthesizes James Joyce's theological allusions in Ulysses with Maxwell Davies's similar preoccupations in Taverner in an unusually appropriate manner. The theme becomes the vehicle for a sceptical appraisal of Catholicism, analogous to Mr Bloom's and

Stephen Dedalus' attitude throughout the novel. Moreover, while the references to different phases of music history were coincidental with Mackay Brown's adoption of various literary styles in A Spell for Greencorn, they were consistent with Joyce's appropriation of a wide range of literary techniques in The Oxen of the Sun, which Maxwell Davies regards as a compendium of 'pretty well the history of literature'.<sup>28</sup> As in the Cyclops Episode, there is an allusion to the Liturgy for Good Friday, through the invocation of the 'Improperia' in a Biblical style resembling the Authorized Version. The Latin original, quoted by Gilbert,<sup>29</sup> may have influenced Maxwell Davies's decision to give greater prominence to the extracts from the Vulgate in the revised version of Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé'.

An important facet of these three episodes is that beneath the surface detail, there are many structural similarities. Each has a chaotic climax dissolving into bathos or absurdity. In the Cyclops Episode, there is a vision of Mr Bloom's assumption into heaven ending: 'And they beheld him even him, Ben Bloom Elijah, amid clouds of angels ascend to the glory of the brightness at an angle of 45 degrees over Donohoe's in Little Green Street like a shot off a shuttle'. In The Oxen of the Sun, the English language is reduced to the harangue of an evangelical preacher: 'Come on, you wine fizzling, gin sizzling, booze guzzling existences! Come on, you dog-gone bull necked,

beetle browed, hog jowled, peanut brained, weasel eyed, foreflushers, false alarms and excess baggage! Come on, you triple extract of infamy', etc. In Circe, the sentimentality of Mr Bloom's recollection of his infant son is exaggerated as his vision is transformed into that of an eleven-year-old (his age, had he lived) and combined with the image of Stephen gradually recovering consciousness. The dissolution of the 'L'Homme Armé' melody into the 'sickly sweet' Victorian hymn tune<sup>30</sup> at the end of the work (see also its slightly amended re-appearance in the sixth 'Station' of Vesalii Icones - The Mocking of Christ) corresponds to this process.

There is an equally striking similarity between the opening of The Oxen of the Sun and the introductory bars of Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé'. The three-fold repetition of three phrases in the former are matched by the thrice repeated gesture of the latter. Each has liturgical implications: the nine-fold Kyrie - 'Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison, Kyrie Eleison' - and the three repetitions of the Agnus Dei, respectively. Gilbert has pointed out that the phrases in the Joyce are fanciful elaborations of ordinary ideas,<sup>31</sup> and this applies to the opening of Maxwell Davies's score. The First six bars constitute a cadence from G minor to major, within which are a sequence of half and full cadences. The opening phrase, bars 1/3, comprises a perfect cadence, complete with dominant 7th. This phrase then becomes the



first part of a more elaborate projection of the same process, in which the two chords of bar 4, forming a quasi-imperfect cadence with their implied modulation to E flat, fulfil the function previously allotted to the dominant 7th. The remaining three chords, bars 5/6, constitute a perfect resolution in G major, via another dominant 7th, but they also complete the symmetry of a minute 'ternary' structure, with bar 4 as the 'middle section'. The 'Joycean elaborations' which disguise the simplicity of this scheme comprise a series of instrumental flourishes in which the clarinet is given particular prominence while the piccolo has the pitches which begin the quotation of the L'Homme Armé at letter (A), on handbells. This is what is referred to in the following extract from the composer's note: 'The first sub-section presents the opening of the 15th century Agnus Dei more or less straight on the instruments, except that this is prefaced by a harmonization of part of the tune L'Homme Armé in a popular song style, though not one of the 15th century'. Besides outlining the harmonic and, to some extent, the thematic content of the work, they immediately establish its overall character. The decorative material is thus integral to the music and the passage represents a good example of the composer's use of the past as the basis of innovation.

Two of James Joyce's literary techniques are suggested by these opening measures. The expansion of the original

cadence can be regarded as an example of embryonic development (The Oxen of the Sun), while the elements of distortion resulting from the instrumental elaborations imply the influence of gigantism (Cyclops).

Although there is a passage of 15th-century prose in The Oxen of the Sun, Maxwell Davies's initial fidelity to the compositional style of the period probably reflects his original intention of using the extant Mass fragment as a completion exercise, not least because he reproduces the manner of Renaissance polyphony, including an unusual accent sign - a short diagonal stroke descending from right to left - to denote the stress in the musical line. Yet while the opening section (letters (A) to (E)) is essentially pastiche, the identity of the theme has been somewhat obscured. It is still audible in long notes on handbells and crotales, but with each three-note figure separated from the next by a gap. A variant is given to cello and violin. The cello begins on G, while the violin has D and A in double stopping. The piccolo part also begins on D, and plays parallel fifths or major ninths. B naturals are sometimes preferred to B flats to retain these parallel intervals. The line with which the harmonium fills in the harmony is a further derivation, but with the addition of two dominant 7th chords in G (left-hand part) - which form an accent by thickening the texture. Both are marked crescendo to forte. Besides reinforcing the principal notes of the harmonium part by concentrating

on G and D, the clarinet part is derived from the pitches of the L'Homme Armé melody and possibly also from the Dorian mode in G.

There are changes in the distribution of the parts as the music unfolds but the composer's adherence to the style of the pre-existing material is only gradually undermined. Nevertheless, by letter (C) there are clear indications of the intrusion of other influences. An element of exaggeration is incorporated into the clarinet writing, while the cello and harmonium share a counter-theme. Indeed, the harsh imitation of mutation stops on medieval organs by clarinet and piccolo is reminiscent of Antichrist. All this is in accordance with the opening pages of the Cyclops Episode, where the use of gigantism is tentatively suggested.

There is a decisive alteration of mood and style at letter (E). The sudden interpolation by the violin of pizzicato figures in a disjointed rhythm disturbs the prevailing polyphonic texture, and there is an equivalent disruption to the vertical alignment of the parts. Initially, this stems from the cello phrase: g b flat c' d'', while the fact that the cello part is unbarred, and it has a new tempo marking - crotchet equals 120 - destabilizes the rhythm. Moreover, although the sustained chord in the harmonium alludes to the original modal harmony, additional pitches superimpose a clashing harmony in a manner familiar from some of

Stravinsky's early scores. The process of disintegration, originally given impetus by the clarinet: b'' flat c''' d''', supported by tabor, is enhanced by the cello phrase: d' f' d'' c' b' flat g' (possibly derived from the cello part at the bar after letter (E), especially as the last two notes are doubled by a violin glissando from b' flat to d'' flat. The first four notes of the cello part at bar after letter (E) are then reversed to form the last four pitches of the varied and abbreviated repetition, and the glissando is also reversed, ending on g'.

In the ensuing passage, the main focus is created by the rhythmic fragmentation and exploration of extreme registers, glissandi and rising dynamics. Thus, although the harmonium maintains the basic harmony throughout, it is increasingly distorted. The full implications of the changing status of the original material brought about by 'foreign' influences only become apparent with the introduction of the text, but this is the equivalent of the Joycean technique in which the central narrative of the Cyclops Episode is continually thrown out of focus by the various digressions.

As the harmony is suspended, several versions of the theme are presented during a gradual accelerando, and, together with the original harmony, they are tinged with irony, especially when an element of distortion is introduced into the violin part by means of sudden dynamic alterations from

triple forte to piano, the latter notes being emphasized by an additional dolce marking. This also applies to the skeleton of the L'Homme Armé tune embodied in the five chords played by the harmonium just before letter (G). Letter (G) 'develops' two of the 'passing ideas' announced during letter (F). These are the jazz influence, signalled by the powerful timpani beats, together with elements of Maxwell Davies's characteristic counterpoint. The score shows the extent to which the composer identifies with the improvisatory aspects of the former. Apart from a brief change of tempo, to andante moderato, letter (G) is marked 'tempo di foxtrot', and figured bass is introduced at letter (H).

The section comprising letters (A) to (G) can be regarded as an 'exposition' in that it introduces both the basic material and the main stylistic features of the work. The allusions to the introduction and letter (A) at both letters (H) and (K) indicate the beginning of new cycles of events. Thus the overall plan of Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé' bears some resemblance to the 'double' of 17th-century music, in which the original material is subject to different types of elaboration involving parody, distortion and exaggeration, as well as variation form. The element of exaggeration is particularly important in that it illustrates the mounting hysteria associated with the four extracts of recitation taken from St Luke's account of the betrayal of Christ. It

also incorporates the Joycean technique of 'gigantism', striking examples of which are the culmination of an improvisatory passage at letter (N), based on a three-note figure played by the harmonium, in which the tempo di foxtrot episode is transformed into a 'tempo di quickstep', or the metamorphosis of the L'Homme Armé theme into a parody Victorian hymn-tune - regarded by the composer as the ultimate blasphemy<sup>32</sup> - prior to the music's final disintegration into an inconclusive ending.

In conjunction, these passages are analogous to the multiple levels of parody in the Cyclops episode, or the complete debasement of English in the Oxen of the Sun, which the composer associates with the corruption of religious and cultural values. Indeed, Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé' encapsulates Maxwell Davies's response to two paradoxes that profoundly affected his creative personality during the later 1960s: the fact that Judas's act of betrayal was a necessary condition of the founding of Christianity, based on the sacrifice of the Mass, as well as the realization that all traditions contain not only the seeds of their own destruction, but also the possibility of regeneration. Moreover, notwithstanding the influence of Mackay Brown, the problems addressed in Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé' have continued to haunt the composer, and the opera, Resurrection (see Chapter 8) represents a further attempt to confront similar issues. However, despite the recurrence

of many of the features encountered in the earlier work, together with other scores of the period, it will be seen that the intervening years, in which relative stability has been achieved within a small community and a strong association has been established with the work of a single writer, have contributed to substantial modifications of Maxwell Davies's style. As a result, it has not been possible for him to fully recapture the intensity that characterized his music in the later 1960s.

#### Notes.

- 1 M. Lindsay (Editor), 1979, Pages 9/21.
- 2 A. Bold, 1978, Page 16.
- 3 A. Bold, Op. Cit., Page 14.
- 4 T. S. Eliot, 1944, Page 26.
- 5 B. Ford (Editor), 1983, Pages 15/61.
- 6 E. Huberman, in G. Ross Roy (Editor), 1981, Pages 122/134.
- 7 A. Bold, Op. Cit., Page 20.
- 8 M. Lindsay, Op. Cit.
- 9 A. Bold, Op. Cit., Page 24.
- 10 B. Northcott, Music in our Time, The Manchester School, B.B.C. Radio 3, 4th November 1982.
- 11 S. Pruslin (Editor), 1979, Page 46.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 A. Bold, Op. Cit., Page 85.

- 14 S. Gilbert, 1963, Pages 46/47.
- 15 S. Gilbert, Op. Cit., Page 46.
- 16 S. Gilbert, Op. Cit., Page 33. The composer has quoted this passage on more than one occasion, notably, during the lecture delivered at the National Sound Archive on 13th March 1984.
- 17 S. Gilbert, Op. Cit., Page 16.
- 18 S. Gilbert, Op. Cit., Page 25.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 S. Gilbert, Op. Cit., Page 232.
- 21 Notes to Record No. DSL02.
- 22 T. Tanner, 1971, Page 20.
- 23 H. W. Henze, 1982, Pages 143/157.
- 24 P. Griffiths, 1982, 2, Page 150.
- 25 S. Pruslin (Editor), 1979, Page 44.
- 26 T. Sutcliffe, 1972, Pages 26/28.
- 27 S. Gilbert, Op. Cit., Page 237.
- 28 B.B.C. Third Programme, 25th June 1967.
- 29 S. Gilbert, Op. Cit., Page 260.
- 30 S. Pruslin (Editor), Op. Cit., Page 64.
- 31 S. Gilbert, Op. Cit., Page 255.
- 32 S. Pruslin (Editor), Op. Cit., Page 66.



### CHAPTER THREE

#### Section 1 Revelation and Fall.

Revelation and Fall can be cited as an outstanding work, born of the impossibility of reconciling all aspects of the text with the music. In the light of Maxwell Davies's subsequent settings of the writings of George Mackay Brown, his earlier attempt to set Trakl's prose poem can be viewed as an abortive excursion into the realms of 'modernist' literature where the narrative techniques adopted by the writer conflicted with those employed by the composer. Its importance in Maxwell Davies's oeuvre arises from the fact that such a text should have proved the starting-point for his gradual re-integration of traditional procedures, while using its 'expressionist' possibilities in a way that appeared to enlarge the boundaries of 'modernism'. Parallels with Schoenberg are inevitable, not least because Maxwell Davies starts from the comparable assumption that 'modernism' in literature and music are essentially compatible, only to discover that their paths diverge in many respects.

Maxwell Davies's technical development during the 1960s as charted by David Roberts's thesis was invariably linked to his preoccupation with 'expressionism', and this was exacerbated as his attempt to formulate the musical language of Taverner provoked a violent response to its themes and

symbolism. The rupture corresponds closely to the composition of Act II of the opera, whose first three scenes parody Scenes 1, 3 and 2, respectively, of Act I. The result was a fragmentation of styles, so that when the composer encountered Trakl's text, the example of Schoenberg's 'expressionist' phase was entirely apposite. Analysing several of Schoenberg's settings of Stefan George's poetry in Das Buch Der Hangenden Garten, Lawrence Kramer places this cycle in the context of the development of song throughout the 19th-century. He argues that although the development of 'romanticism' in music and literature has been marked by a number of similar characteristics, including a significant emphasis of repetition and the frequent occurrence of generative forms, then create a substantially different result in the realm of art-song, despite the widespread assumption that this genre offered the greatest potential for the synthesis of music and poetry. He suggested that in the majority of examples, 'the poetry and the music would pull the voice in different directions', so that a 'song . . . does not use a reading, it is a reading in the critical, as well as the performative sense of the term, an activity of interpretation that works through a text without being bound by authorial intention.'<sup>1</sup> He cites numerous examples of poets and composers recognizing music's power to alter or subvert the meaning of the text, contrasting Pierre Boulez's attitude set forth in his notes to the recording of Pli Selon Pli: 'My idea is not to be restricted to immediate

understanding, which is only one of the forms, the least  
rich, perhaps, in the transmutation of a poem''<sup>2</sup> with  
Michael Tippett's disinclination ''to destroy the verbal  
music of any real poetry by instrumental or vocal music and  
prefer to manufacture a scenario of words myself''<sup>3</sup>.

Boulez's position is typical of the avant-garde of the  
1960s. The emphasis on musical 'abstraction', resulting from  
their preoccupation with the synthesis of serialism with  
elements of chance precluded a traditional view of text  
setting. The composition of 'Taverner' demanded a more  
conventional approach to vocal writing, together with  
largescale structures capable of sustaining a considerable  
amount of dramatic contrast, whereas Maxwell Davies's choice  
of poetic texts, though designed to extend his expressive  
vocabulary, stimulated the possibility of generating a non-  
conventional approach towards vocal writing. For his first  
setting of a secular text, he turned to an Italian poet of  
the early 'romantic' era. As in the case of John Taverner  
and possibly Stephen Dedalus, an element of identification  
appears to have been involved, for the composer has spoken of  
the appeal of Leopardi's verse to his pessimistic  
temperament.<sup>4</sup> His creative response may also have been  
induced by the fact that Giacomo Leopardi was a solitary  
writer who 'never shared the literary theories of Manzoni and  
the Milanese 'romantics'',<sup>5</sup> and, with hindsight, may be  
regarded as the first indication of Maxwell Davies's

ambivalent attitude to the 1960s avant-garde. Additionally, Maxwell Davies has pointed out that as he was not involved in the 19th-century poetry 'in the same way as I was involved in the music of that period',<sup>6</sup> there was no danger of being inhibited by the 'romantic' imagery, and it was possible to select freely from the text. As such, he chose passages that might have appealed to the madrigalists of the early 17th-century, not least Monteverdi, whose Vespers of 1610 formed the background to the Leopardi Fragments. He also suggested that the fragmentary nature of the text provided a greater musical stimulus than would have been achieved with larger extracts. His development of the decorative aspects of Monteverdi's vocal technique was extended to the surrounding works, so that the element of improvisation associated with the presentation of melismata is also apparent in the String Quartet and Sinfonia. The extent to which Maxwell Davies introduced a strong lyrical impulse into these works without creating any stylistic inconsistency can be gauged from the fact that none of them exhibit any signs of the composer's use of parody as it was to develop in the later 1960s, even though there is no distinction in the way they rely on pre-existing material.

By the time Revelation and Fall was composed, lyricism had been superseded by 'expressionism', though the choice of Georg Trakl's prose poem stemmed from the receipt of a collection of his poetry as a birthday gift.<sup>7</sup> In an

attempt to realize the full implications of the text, the composer evoked the atmosphere of the period in which it was written by referring to several of the prevailing musical styles. The problems encountered were such that he felt it necessary to parody and distort these styles by exaggerating the gestures introduced by Schoenberg in Pierrot Lunaire, among other scores. The unsettling and alienating tendencies associated with Sprechstimme, including screaming, were carried to their logical conclusion by the addition of a loudhailer. Whereas Schoenberg employed Sprechstimme consistently, enabling the listener to overcome any initial feeling of estrangement by means of a degree of familiarization, Maxwell Davies used it intermittently, reinforcing its dramatic impact with several theatrical 'devices'. The singer is clad in a vivid red nun's habit, corresponding to the symbolism of the poem with its references to red wine, blood and pentecostal fire. In addition, as with its English equivalent (sister), the word 'Schwester' also means 'nun', thereby introducing another element of ambiguity in relation to the spectral figure depicted in Trakl's text. The religious connotations are enhanced by the fact that she stands behind a lectern. The specially made percussion instruments are also brightly coloured and many of them are amplified. This is in accordance with the dramatic character of the setting and the need to register the powerful sense of alienation in Trakl's text.

The significance attached by Maxwell Davies to this aspect of Trakl's poetry distinguishes his approach from other settings. No less important was the composer's response to what Trakl was trying to achieve in the poem - the depiction of an instantaneous, hallucinatory experience, using techniques associated with literary 'modernism'. His determination to express the full implications of Trakl's text involved an unprecedented dislocation of music and poetry. Besides evoking its hysteria, Maxwell Davies's interpretation of the poem extended beyond the violent fantasy it describes. It was influenced by the knowledge of the poet's mental instability and the fact that the outbreak of war induced his suicide. The links established with Taverner at the level of basic compositional material<sup>8</sup> attained a more concrete form of expression in relation to the text. The poem was ostensibly concerned with very different subject-matter, yet the issues it shares with the opera include the impossibility of distinguishing between 'appearance' and 'reality', and the nature of religious experience. Both questions impinged on realms of consciousness that 'modernism' sought to explore, and in addition, Trakl, like John Taverner, had to contend with an immense social and political upheaval. In reacting to this aspect of the poet's experience, Maxwell Davies symbolized the crisis by parodying its various manifestations, not only through references to Schoenberg's restoration of traditional

elements - likewise, frequently involving parody - in response to the texts he was setting, but also through allusions to Lehar and other popular music of the time which remained oblivious to the impending catastrophe of the First World War.

Another feature of popular music to which both Schoenberg and Maxwell Davies referred is the fact that it remains unaware of the problem raised by 'atonal' composition, whereby each work has to define its own processes independently of a widely established harmonic context. The difficulty of creating a clear focus against which subtle changes in the meaning or mood of the text can be measured is thus increased. This problem is exacerbated when composers select texts which are similarly elusive as a result of an equivalent rejection of literary conventions. In the case of Revelation and Fall, the demands of the poem militated against Maxwell Davies's inclination towards 'abstract' composition, but it also required a clear structural outline for the realization of its dramatic possibilities. The same issue had to be resolved in the composition of Taverner, and the intensity of both works is based upon internal conflicts in which rigorous organization at every level, involving 'sets' and 'transformation processes', contends with a violently 'expressionist' foreground.

Stephen Arnold has demonstrated that in the opera,

'transformation processes' influencing pitch and duration are introduced in Act I Scene 4, where the identity of the music is symbolically changed in conjunction with John Taverner's 'conversion' from Catholic composer to Protestant zealot.<sup>9</sup> They take place against a relatively stable background in which the structure of Act II closely parallels that of Act I. This formal similarity can be interpreted as showing that instead of bringing about fundamental change, the Reformation merely distorted problems it was intended to solve - hence the extent to which parody dominates the foreground of Act II. Consequently, a measure of cohesion is achieved between the 'expressionist' elements and the underlying form, almost certainly attributable to the fact that the composer wrote his own libretto.

Revelation and Fall is not concerned with religious 'conversion', but with the problem that pervades all Maxwell Davies's music of the later 1960s: 'In a Godless world, to create God after one's own image is to call up the Devil'.<sup>10</sup> In contrast to John Taverner, both Trakl and Maxwell Davies have had to contend with the abandonment of universally accepted beliefs. Accordingly, the links between Revelation and Fall and the opera extend beyond the purely musical domain, so the text can be interpreted as reflecting that Trakl, like Taverner and Maxwell Davies, was attempting to 'look . . . out afresh, a new reality, by scorching reason'. Trakl's response involved presenting his quest for some kind



of religious 'truth' in metaphorical terms. Yet while this aspect undoubtedly appealed to the composer, it raised even more acutely than in Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé' difficulties stemming from the fact that the distinction between 'realist' and 'modernist' literature does not correspond to the opposition between 'tonal' and non-'tonal' music. At the traditional end of the spectrum, comparison can be made between linear plot and tonal organization, while at the other extreme, word, or symbolic patterning and automatic writing can be associated respectively with total serialism and aleatoricism; but the means by which these features are integrated into literary or musical discourse highlight fundamental differences between verbal and musical expression.

It is self-evident that whereas verbal language includes metaphor and metonymy, music does not. Nevertheless, this observation is worth mentioning, for it is possible to cite close parallels to this distinction in other forms of visual expression, so that music appears to be at an unique disadvantage in this regard. Besides the fact that structuralist critics have formulated a distinction between 'modernism' and 'realism' in terms of the polar opposition between metaphor and metonymy, a brief outline of the way these categories are deployed in the analysis of literary, or related forms of discourse, provides a useful insight into the problems the composer is likely to encounter when setting

texts, having discarded the comparative stability of 'tonal' music.

According to David Lodge, who has based his interpretation of the structuralist approach on the writings of Roman Jakobson,<sup>11</sup> the starting-point of the theory is that in common with other systems of signs, the use of language<sup>12</sup> 'involves two operations: selection and combination'. Superficially, the principle of selecting and combining 'certain linguistic entities . . . into linguistic units of a higher degree of complexity',<sup>13</sup> resembles the process of combining and re-combining 'abstract' devices to achieve 'higher levels of abstraction'.<sup>14</sup> However, the notion of 'abstraction' immediately sets music apart from other sign systems, where 'devices' which are combined and re-combined have no meaning in themselves, but only in relation to the overall scheme. In compositions based on 'sets' or 'series', they are often classified as pre-compositional material. Consequently, they serve a single function, whereas in literary discourse, 'the distinction between selection and combination corresponds to the binary opposition between paradigm, or system and syntagm: between code and message'.<sup>15</sup> At the one end of the spectrum (the selection axis of language), are words of similar grammatical function and meaning. It is from this axis that metaphor is generated, for 'selection involves the perception of similarity to group the items of the system into sets'.<sup>16</sup> It

includes the substitution of alternative words based on similarity and contrast. The metaphoric mode is generally predominant in drama, montage, dream symbolism, surrealism, poetry, lyric forms of expression, romanticism and symbolism. At the other end of the spectrum is the combination axis<sup>17</sup> involving 'the juxtaposition . . . of different elements' to form a linguistic unit such as a sentence. In Jakobson's terminology, whereas selection implies substitution, combination depends on 'contexture': 'the process by which 'any linguistic unit at one and the same time serves as a context for simpler units, and/or finds its own context in a more complex linguistic unit''<sup>18</sup>. Besides its obvious relationship to the principle of representing the whole by a part (synecdoche), it emphasizes the notion of contiguity, regarded by Jakobson as the generative basis of metonymy with which synecdoche is closely associated.

David Lodge has argued that since metonymy is often thought of as a species of metaphor on the ground that one term is substituted for another, the role of combination in Jakobson's theory of language can be clarified by amending the idea of substitution to that of deletion. He justifies this suggestion with the observation that 'contexture' is a 'law of language' and therefore 'not an optional operation in quite the same way as 'substitution' . . . metonymy and synecdoche are condensations of 'contexture''<sup>19</sup>. In contrast to metaphor, the metonymic mode is usually

associated with film, close-up, dream condensation and displacement, cubism, prose, epic forms of expression, realism.

The significance of this discussion is that generally, music and text can only meet on the basis of absolute equality in settings of nonsense verse, where the usual syntactic and semantic criteria do not apply. A good example is Ernst Toch's Geographical Fugue, where the verbal component consists of place names linked only by a few conjunctions and qualified by even fewer adjectives, while the musical element is divested of all pitch content and comprises a fugal structure based on the rhythmic properties: Trinidad, and the great Mississippi, and the town Honolulu', etc. More seriously, Mauricio Kagel has frequently reduced verbal and musical language to their most basic gestures in a number of music-theatre works, partly for satirical purposes, emphasizing the extent to which all aspects of culture and society have been distorted by the falsification of the various language systems, but also in an attempt to establish a common basis for more complex forms of expression.

Insofar as Lodge's account may elucidate why Revelation and Fall carries this process to its extreme (by attempting to combine the respective languages in their most complex formulations), it is also intended that it should provide the basis of a comparison with Maxwell Davies's Mackay Brown

settings in that the 'objectivity' of the texts selected by the composer implies a greater emphasis on the realistic aspects, as opposed to their metaphorical and 'expressionist' features.

The extremism of Trakl's prose can be partly explained by its concentration on metaphor as a means of rendering the instability of the 'narrator'. The unsettling character of the text, resulting from the disjunction of imagery, bears comparison with more recent 'modernists' who, as Lodge observes, have explored dislocation of 'either the selection, or the combination axes of language' to the extent that the texts begin to resemble the mental condition called aphasia, involving an inability to use metaphor and metonymy in roughly equal measure. The problem for the composer is not only how he can create an analogous effect in music, given that he is operating with a totally different system of signs, but also determining which texts are likely to prove most amenable to a post-'tonal' setting.

Prior to Maxwell Davies, Schoenberg had attempted to overcome this difficulty in his 'atonal' and 'serial' music, and his failure to discover suitable texts for the musical language he was forging may help to explain his inability to complete his most ambitious vocal works during these phases of his compositional development. Although he resorted increasingly to vocal music as he abandoned 'functional'

harmony, his chromatic language, despite its suitability for the settings of Stefan George, proved less effective in relation to texts whose imagery and symbolism was less 'expressionist' in character. The usual explanations for his failure to provide the music for Part II of Die Jakobsleiter, or Act III of Moses und Aron stress the element of personal upheaval as Schoenberg was conscripted for military service, or forced to emigrate following the advent of Nazism. Yet both works were concerned with metaphysical, or visionary texts, and while it had been possible to set such a text in the finale of the Second String Quartet, where vestiges of 'tonality' can still be discerned, the subsequent loss of 'tonal' perspective proved decisive when attempting to deal with words which transcended the realm of psychological, or realistic drama, and were primarily concerned with 'a divine order of existence'.<sup>20</sup> Ultimately, texts exhibiting metaphysical, or visionary characteristics, or concentrating on either of the extreme tendencies associated with literary 'modernism' were incompatible with Schoenberg's compositional preoccupations, hence the failure of other largescale religious projects, including a partly choral symphony. He tacitly acknowledged this fact by evolving 'a form of neoclassicism'<sup>21</sup> in conjunction with his serial method, so that having recognized that neither poetry nor Biblical texts could provide an alternative focus of comparable consistency to 'tonality', he concentrated on giving the 'row'

'functional' features. This was achieved in the Violin Concerto, where the prominence of particular 'set forms alludes to conventional harmony',<sup>22</sup> but not to the extent that it could accommodate the full implications of the text of Moses und Aron. Thus Schoenberg abandoned extensive vocal composition.

Maxwell Davies's gradual rehabilitation of traditional elements is illuminated by Schoenberg's experience, especially as Trakl's poem seems to have precipitated the process. The appeal of Revelation and Fall to Maxwell Davies can be understood from the fact that at the time he encountered the poem, he was reacting against the prevailing 'orthodoxy' of the 1960s avant-garde: total serialism, or various forms of indeterminacy. His identification with Trakl's situation, as expressed in the turbulent imagery of the poem, was concerned not only with creating a precise musical equivalent to the text, but also with extending his compositional development into higher levels of abstraction. Maxwell Davies has referred to 'a marked extension, in comparison with my earlier works, in the use of late Medieval/Renaissance composition techniques',<sup>23</sup> and David Roberts concludes Chapter 7 of his thesis with the statement that by the early 1960s, the composer had formulated a large number of basic concepts by means of which transformation of any musical material could be undertaken, and subsequently they were developed to a greater degree of sophistication. On

the one hand, they were intended to control the intensity of such texts as Revelation and Fall, and to enable Maxwell Davies to enlarge the boundaries of musical 'expression' in a way that seemed quite radical at the time. On the other, they concealed a reaction against his more 'advanced' contemporaries.

Notwithstanding the composer's remarks about the use of 'sets' or 'series', 'which are in a perpetual state of transformation',<sup>24</sup> together with David Roberts's detailed discussion of the manner in which the complex transformation processes are applied to both pitch-classes and durational values,<sup>25</sup> there is a tendency in Revelation and Fall for certain pitches to be favoured as 'tonal centres'. Intervals of minor or major thirds are given a measure of prominence, implying consonance, if not triadic harmony, and there is some evidence of a comparatively traditional approach to thematic construction, with the main structural outlines of the work being defined by slightly altered versions of the 'chorale-canon'. As the canonic theme shares both the consonant intervals and the emphasis on C and A with the work's principal material, cited by Roberts in the form in which it appears between bars 96/177 of the revised (1980) edition of the score, it will be apparent that a distinct thematic profile is established with allusions to an 'introduction' and an 'exposition'. These features, even though only fleetingly acknowledged by the composer's



reference to such a term as 'recapitulation', point to his enduring preoccupation with sonata-form, irrespective of the exigencies of the text. This may reflect the fact that Revelation and Fall is substantially based on pitch material which had already yielded 'symphonic' results in the Second Taverner Fantasia and the opera but it is equally symptomatic of the problem mentioned by Maxwell Davies in his introduction to Worldes Blis, where he stated that the work was 'a conscious attempt to reintegrate the shattered and scattered fragments of my creative persona'.<sup>26</sup>

Consequently, the work can be approached on more than one level, and David Roberts concentrates on its technical aspects, identifying nine inter-related 'transformation processes', some of them associated with the voice. He offers no observations concerning the relationship of the 'transformation processes' to the text, apart from general comments about their previous use in conjunction with different subject-matter. He mentions the public character of Revelation and Fall, but devotes little attention to the work's parameters other than pitch and duration. The use of exaggerated instrumental gestures provokes some comment, but without consideration of their subversive effect. Above all, the work's dramatic intensity, resulting from the composer's exploitation of extreme dynamics, including the singer's outbursts into a loudhailer, are unremarked.

Roberts's omission of these factors was deliberate, since their 'subjective' character made them less amenable to strict organization. Yet while he ignores the means through which the essence of the text is mainly expressed, his analysis demonstrates the capacity of Maxwell Davies's compositional technique to withstand the disruptive impact of a poem whose interpretation was bound to expose various contradictions between the text and its musical 'realization' Roberts shows that most of the pitch material and 'transformation processes' of Revelation and Fall are derived from bars 1 to 548 of the Second Taverner Fantasia, itself based on the opera. Additionally, the 'chorale-canon' stems from the fifth of his Seven 'In Nomine' (six-part canon), and there is a reference to the Gloria Tibi Trinitas fragment.

The starting-point of the work is an eleven-note pitch 'set' - E flat, C, D flat, G flat, A, B flat, A flat, B, D, E, F (voice: bar 49) - which is systematically transformed by alternating sequences of expanding and contracting intervals. By means of various charts, Roberts illustrates that such procedures 'are . . . another manifestation of hierarchical organization of serial structure'. They could be subjected to the usual forms of manipulation - inversion, retrograde, etc. - as well as various forms of transposition. They could therefore be governed by a 'transposition cycle' or 'transposition square', which would constitute a higher

level of organization. To some extent, a durational scheme is also used, corresponding to the arrangement of the pitch material. The most audible example of these 'transformation processes' affecting the pitch material and the associated duration scheme occurs between brs 96-177. Roberts shows that the 'process' is divided into twelve units for the first eight of which the trumpet and clarinet alternate as principal 'voice': Trumpet - Bars 96-102; Clarinet - bars 103-110; Trumpet - bars 111-118, etc. Thereafter (bar 157), they are heard in combination. The principal 'voice' is harmonized 'in a manner analogous to that of a mixture stop on an organ', the piccolo, oboe and second violin playing in various combinations the octave, perfect twelfth, major sixteenth, minor twenty-first, etc. This procedure is applied in all the sub-sections, each beginning with the minimum number of partials and involving a build-up of parts until the maximum number is reached with the final note. During sub-section 3, the cello enters at bar 114 with a statement of the retrograde inversion of the principal 'voice', arranged so that it forms a canon with the original material. Accompanimental figures on horn and trombone are derived from the primary and secondary 'voices' and the decorative melismas played by clarinet and trumpet when they are not functioning as principal 'voice', or by first violin in sub-sections 9-12, are similarly derived. To some extent, the same principle is applied to the secondary 'voice'. Finally, the rhythmic figures played by suspended cymbals and

woodblocks are associated with the principal and secondary 'voices', respectively.

The strict organization exhibited by bars 96-177 is extended to much of the rest of the work, so that various versions or derivations of the main pitch material and, in some measure, the related duration scheme, can be traced. Among the instances cited by Roberts are the following:-

- Bars 49-71: Voice.
- Bars 178-215: Voice/viola (with duration scheme).
- Bars 305-331: Voice.
- Bars 307-317: Clarinet, first and second violins.
- Bars 318-323: Horn, trombone, violin and cello.
- Bars 324-331: Flute and oboe, plus violins and viola.
- Bars 332-370: Variant of bars 178-215.
- Bars 371-374: Voice.

Besides the two main inter-related 'transformation processes', Roberts identifies a further seven examples including:

- Bars 49-71: First violin.
- Bar 247: Clarinet/trumpet.
- Bars 254-261: Harp.
- Bars 263-271: Double-bass and voice.
- Bars 318-323: Harp - variant of bar 185 - (all derived from

the same 'process').

Bars 245-261: voice.

Bar 247: Piccolo/oboe.

Bars 318/323: Bass-clarinet (variant of statement in bars 245- 261).

Bars 178-215: Harp.

Bars 178-215: Piccolo, oboe, clarinet and trumpet.

In an important sense, the elaborate technical procedures detailed by David Roberts and summarized above contradict the essence of the poem, for they generate a continuous span of music lasting twenty-five minutes, whereas Trakl's intention was to recreate the intensity of an instantaneous experience. Similarly, Maxwell Davies attempts to establish a definite focus in the music, whereas the text is freely constructed with neither a regular metre nor rhyme-scheme. Trakl concentrates almost exclusively on his imagery and symbolism, while the ambiguous status of the 'narrator' is another significant factor. The poem may be Trakl's account of a drug-induced hallucination, or it may be a dream. There is even a hint that the 'narrator', as well as 'the sister', is a ghost. This last aspect assumes greater importance in the interpretation of the poem as embodying 'the meaning of the Crucifixion for an intensely religious, but unstable person'.<sup>27</sup>

The poem begins by depicting the 'narrator's' complete isolation, with the 'smoke-corroded beams' functioning as the only descriptive feature which is not integral to the experience he describes. Once the initial phrase of the opening sentence has established a clear sense of location in accordance with the tenets of 'realism', this mode is abandoned. The rest of the sentence immediately begins to undermine the position of the 'narrator' by presenting what purports to be a 'self-portrait' in terms of images which are either contradictory, 'a radiant corpse', ('Ein strahlender Leichnam'), or ambiguous, 'head bowed over a pool of darkness' ('über ein dunkles geneigt'). The significance of the 'pool of darkness' is ultimately revealed as the 'lonely glass of wine'. Red wine is indicated, not only because of the obvious association with blood and fire, but also in view of the pattern of Christian symbolism which begins to develop in the final part of the opening sentence. Besides its links with Christian sacrifice, the 'dead lamb' denotes a decisive switch to metaphor.

By contrast, although the surface detail of Maxwell Davies's setting displays considerable fidelity to the text, not least through the intensity with which it begins, the fact that it is based on complex musical processes - even though these are largely inaudible - invests the poem with a feeling of context which it had previously lacked. In this connection, David Roberts has stressed the extent to which such

'processes' are 'goal-oriented'. It is this factor which gives the music its focus, and its linear progress is enhanced by the repetitions of the 'chorale-canon'. Consequently, a bias is evinced towards the metonymic pole, insofar as the listener's awareness of 'real time' is enhanced. In comparison with Trakl's conception, the 'meaning' of the poem is subtly altered by being given a more 'traditional' cast.

Further enlightenment on the resulting disparity can be gained from Edward T. Cone's essay, On Two Modes of  
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Aesthetic Perception, where he distinguishes between 'synoptic comprehension' and 'immediate apprehension'. As in the case of metaphor and metonymy, both forms of perception are usually present in roughly equal measure, but much 'modernist' art tends to stress immediacy of impact, as opposed to a full appreciation of its structural unity. Trakl's text belongs to this category by virtue of its emphasis on the intensity of the momentary experience, and by reducing the 'realistic' element to a minimum. It achieves a degree of autonomy which, as Cone has remarked in respect of 'abstract' sculpture, 'can appear so hermetic as, exceptionally, to defy one to supply any surrounding internal  
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 environment'.

This is another area where the manifestation of 'modernism' in music differs from the other arts. Part of the

explanation stems from the fact that in music, an awareness of time is of primary significance, whereas in poetry it is of only secondary importance. A short poem, such as Trakl's text, lends itself to immediate apprehension insofar as its overall shape can be instantly scanned. Under the influence of literary 'modernism', the narrative aspect is reduced, so that the imagery of the poem no longer has to be 'read' in a specific order. By contrast, the events in a musical performance follow a definite sequence, and can only be contemplated through time. The abandonment of tonality may result in music which has no obvious feeling of progress, but its limitations become apparent when it is confronted with a text where the suspension of time is achieved more effectively and with greater economy. It is in this sense that Trakl's poem can be regarded as unsuitable for Maxwell Davies, but its attraction for the composer can also be understood, given the possibility that Taverner can be interpreted as a psychological drama which takes place inside the head of the chief protagonist. Notwithstanding their different subject-matter, both works confront the problem of creating an appropriate musical analogy for an instantaneous experience, but in Revelation and Fall, the difficulty is exacerbated by the fact that, unlike the opera, it does not offer the possibility of an alternative interpretation, based on historical events. The dramatic presentation of Taverner contains sufficient elements of 'realism' and symbolic action to suggest the flow of time in a way that



matches the linear character of the music, as can be seen from the stage representation of John Taverner's 'conversion', in conjunction with the thematic transformations (Act I, Scene 4). In this respect, it is worth noting that not only were the 'transformation processes' employed in Revelation and Fall associated with the opera, but also that Maxwell Davies incorporated visual elements to extend the 'meaning' of the poem. Besides the singer's red nun's habit, many of the unusual percussion instruments, such as a glass smashing machine, and a series of metal cylinders of different sizes, are brightly coloured. Their function is deliberately ambiguous. On one level, they emphasize the lurid symbolism of the text; at the same time, they combine with other features to dramatize the text in such a way as to distance the listener from the music. The amplification of the more exotic percussion instruments, in conjunction with the singer's use of a loudhailer, as well as the exaggerated gestures frequently required from other members of the ensemble, intensify the 'expressionism' of the poem, but the inevitable distortion also creates an alienating effect. Gabriel Josipovici would deny that this is the case, for he has argued that Maxwell Davies's profound attachment to 'romanticism' in German music<sup>31</sup> has prevented him from relying on 'distancing conventions'; yet in attempting to accommodate Trakl's poem within the 'romantic' tradition, Maxwell Davies was faced with an unprecedented dislocation of his compositional style and

needed to confront the question as to whether 'modernism' was primarily an extension of 'romanticism', or a reaction against it.

The use of parody enabled the composer to respond to this issue by evoking the styles of the early 'modernist' period while also alluding to 'traditional' forms. It is notable that these distorted references occur either as 'accompaniment' to the text, or in connection with the 'chorale-canon', which is the principal feature outlining the main divisions of the work's overall structure. Accordingly, the parodic elements form a 'sub-text' in which they help to compensate for the absence of narrative by establishing a 'context'. As such, their function bears comparison with the historical scenes of Taverner. The extended instrumental 'commentaries' fulfil a similar role at the strictly 'musical' level. In other respects, they contrast with the parody material, which 'punctuates', as well as 'accompanies' the poem but also have their counterparts in the opera in the form of the purely orchestral sections from which the Second Taverner Fantasia is substantially derived. Their purpose is to generate tension, and insofar as in Revelation and Fall, particularly, the 'commentaries' display no obvious relationship to the text, they are concerned with the form of the work, rather than its content. From this, it is apparent that Maxwell Davies overcame the disparity between Trakl's poetic conception and his own compositional

preoccupations by using the element of contrast to create a sharp distinction between the instrumental sections and the vocal portions of the score.

Unlike Schoenberg, Maxwell Davies's musical development was not influenced by 'modernist' literature, but had its sources in the proportional organization of both architecture and music of the Medieval/Renaissance periods, the standard 'symphonic' repertoire and post-war European 'serial' techniques. His compositional style was thus based on 'abstract' concepts which were essentially arithmetical in character, and though these increased in complexity in response to the 'expressionist' aspects of the work, the 'commentaries' suggest that a feeling of continuity has been maintained with the composer's earlier development.

The introduction to bar 20 fulfils this purpose for either thread of the discourse equally well, because the 'realism' associated with the opening of the text can be accommodated within a comparatively conventional vocal style. The discrepancy between the agitated instrumental writing, especially for trumpet and pebbles, and the subsequent setting of the first sentence of the poem is sufficient to prefigure the intensity of the rest of the work, but does not prevent a smooth transition to the first vocal entry. There is no suggestion of parody for the first appearance of the 'chorale-canon' (bar 72), denoting the end of the

introduction.

At bar 79, the dislocation between the need to illustrate the text and the underlying processes of the music begins to be apparent. The change of tone had been foreshadowed from bar 49, where the eerie character of the words is emphasized by the violin (having re-tuned) playing open fifths, accompanied by metal claves; but the instability of the poem's 'world' is confirmed by the opening of the second sentence: 'Out of the unstable azure stepped the pale form of the sister' ('Aus verwesender Blaue trat die bleiche Gestalt der Schwester'). Not the least difficulty is that colour begins to emerge as a significant factor, influencing the 'meaning' of the poem on several levels. Besides its symbolic connotations, its fleeting quality emphasizes the constantly changing impact of the 'narrator's' perceptions. The sister's 'pale form' provides the first notion of the 'spectre', and this is expanded into a powerful climax following a steady 'crescendo' of imagery. The bleeding lips of 'the sister' are ambiguous with regard to their associative potential, but in comparison with her 'pale form', they achieve a much greater 'presence'. The words she utters: 'Sharp stab of the black thorn' ('Stich schwarzer dorn'), are equally ambiguous, but they are conveyed as a precise recollection on the part of the poet.

Maxwell Davies indicates that the phrase 'Aus verwesender

'Blaue' is to be spoken within a single bar which contrasts rhythmically with the setting of the preceding portion of the text and recalls the urgency of the instrumental introduction. The alternating sequences of pebbles and cymbals between bars 80/91, where the vocal line reverts to conventional singing, are a further reminder. This is in keeping with the vein of recollection established at the beginning of the poem. The use of the pebbles to provide an exact instrumental equivalent to the staccato delivery of the voice, inspired by both the sound and meaning of the phrase, 'Stich schwarzer Dorn', is also the culmination of a tendency whereby key words had previously been highlighted by percussive gestures.

In view of the composer's statement that the music to 'Alas, my ear still cannot escape the silver embrace of angry tempests' ('Ach noch tonen von wilden Gewittern die silbernen arme mir') is 'recapitulatory',<sup>32</sup> even though, in terms of bar numbers, bar 178 does not constitute the halfway point of the work, it is clear that the instrumental 'commentary' (bars 96/177) can be regarded as analogous to a 'development' section. As such, it fulfils an architectural function, notwithstanding the fact that the relationship of what Maxwell Davies describes as 'the main argument of the interlocking structures'<sup>33</sup> to the text is ambiguous. On one level, the composer's setting adheres quite closely to the structure of the poem. The opening paragraph of Trakl's

text occupies approximately two-thirds of the work's total length, including the instrumental section (bars 96/177), and its division into seven sentences is reproduced in the alternation between vocal and instrumental passages. The wide range of imagery is expressed in terms of maximum musical contrast.

The close correspondence between music and text is sustained throughout the rest of the work as the changing character of the poetry is matched by equivalent modifications in the composer's setting. In terms of the score's overall proportions, bars 278 to the end, including the freely notated final bar, correspond closely with paragraphs 2 and 3 of the text. The music also reflects the changes in Trakl's sentence structure. Each paragraph is set as an unbroken vocal episode, separated by a single instrumental 'commentary'. However, by intensifying the dramatic elements of the opening paragraph and linking these to the principal features of sonata-form, Maxwell Davies relegates the remainder of his setting to a comparatively minor role in the discourse. For instance, by the time the second main 'commentary' is reached, only four sentences of the poem have been covered - though the composer's approach is consistent with his handling of the contrasting time layers in the work. While concentrating on the linear aspect of Maxwell Davies's style, bars 96/177 have the effect of suspending the 'action' of the poem at an important juncture

by delaying the 'narrator's' response to the apparition. In this last respect, their function is the same as the extended improvisation at bar 244, which also prefigures an apparition. In both cases, the linear construction of the music coexists with a feeling of timelessness, so that although different methods are employed, they represent alternative ways of perceiving time from which to focus on the 'narrator's' immediate impressions.

The approach foreshadows Maxwell Davies's exploration of various levels of time in conjunction with Mackay Brown's texts, but the purpose is entirely different. In Revelation and Fall, the intention is to identify with the poet by enhancing the 'subjectivity' of the experience he depicts. In bars 96/177, the contrapuntal material derived primarily from the trumpet and clarinet lines and the obsessive rhythmic figures shared between cymbals and woodblocks belong to the same transformational scheme, yet they constitute the conflicting forces which intensify the impact of Trakl's bizarre imagery: 'Let blood flow from the moonclad feet that tread the paths of night where the rat screeches and scurries on' ('Fliesse Blut von den mondenen Fussen, bluhend auf nachtigen Pfaden, daruber schreiend die Ratte huscht'). At bar 244, an equivalent result is achieved using far less elaborate means.

Notwithstanding the care taken by Maxwell Davies to

reflect the kaleidoscopic imagery of the poem by rapid changes of instrumentation, the advent of the unconventional percussion provides the first indication that the sequences linked to the texts - even though their organization is derived from the main 'transformation processes' cited by Roberts - are beginning to show signs of fragmentation, and this is powerfully reinforced by the addition of the loudhailer at bar 245. Despite the tendency to separate the 'commentaries' from the vocal sections, the use of graphic gestures to illustrate the violent, or sinister imagery of the poem begins to exert a pervasive influence on the surrounding material. This is evident from the brief interlude (bars 216/222) interpolated between the third and fourth sentences of the poem, with its particularly harsh intervals and strident timbres, and is equally noticeable after the phrase: 'and my heart will peal softly in the night' ('und es lautet leise des Herz in der Nacht'), prior to the main climax of the work (bars 245/271). The violence and complex imagery of 'A blood red spectre with flaming sword broke into the house' ('einbrach ein roter Schatten mit flammendem Schwert in das Haus') represents an extension of 'let blood flow from the moonclad feet', hence the greater contrast of tempo and dynamics than at bar 178. The composer's attempt to present the related imagery of the poem in terms of an aural counterpart again involves rapid changes of instrumentation, coupled with an increasing range of vocal gesture, but in responding to the greater intensity of the



text, different compositional styles are introduced. The measure of independence given to the voice, plus the second and third percussionists between bars 245/253 may be regarded as illustrating the limitations of serially organized music when dealing with 'expressionist' poetry. There is an increase in the degree of fragmentation, culminating in the fact that the 'chorale-canon' is played with exaggerated vibrato (bars 272/277). Since the canon functions as the principal means of delineating the form of the music, the element of parody thus introduced shows the extent to which the work's structure has been undermined by the intensity of the text.

From bar 278, the discrepancy between Trakl's poem and Maxwell Davies's interpretation becomes more apparent. The 'transformation processes' continue to unify the music, but their linear character means that they are increasingly at variance with the kind of unity achieved in the poem. Whereas the main climaxes had been based on related patterns of imagery in the text, these audible connections are not extended to create musical equivalents of the links established between paragraphs 2 and 3 and the opening paragraph. These are sufficiently detailed to contribute substantially to the instantaneous character of the poem and illustrate the way in which its construction is based on the transformation of key images. There are references to darkness, including 'a dark voice . . . within me' and 'the

darkness of the woods'. The 'bloodshot eyes' of the 'black horse' can be considered a counterpart of the bleeding lips of 'the sister', and the madness of the horse can be associated with both the poet and the sister. The 'unstable azure' becomes 'azure of laughter', and the 'dead lamb' is transformed into a 'snow white deer'. An equally important link is forged with the 'snow white countenance', particularly as the 'narrator' concludes the second paragraph by admitting to a loss of identity: 'In the hell of rocks and stones my features were lost' ('In Steinerer Holle mein Antlitz erstarb'). Among the images in the third paragraph derived from the first are: 'the lonely glass of wine', and 'a dark cloud hung about my head', but besides their single-sentence structure, paragraphs 2 and 3 balance each other in their reliance on the same symbolism as well as imagery, so that the form of the poem, in addition to its content, contributes to the purgatorial atmosphere. The use of recurring patterns of word-play - very noticeable in the English translation - is not obviously reflected in the motivic organization of the music. The cross-references in the vocal sections tend to be at the gestural level, such as in the climactic passages, or the re-introduction of the loudhailer at bar 278. The 'chorale-canon' is a fully-fledged theme with an architectural function, rather than a motif designed to emphasize particular aspects of the 'narrative', while the links between the third 'commentary' (bars 332/370) and the first of its predecessors are

concerned with the completion of the 'transformation processes'. Between bars 332/347, allowing for the repetition of the tenth and eleventh pitches, the trumpet outlines a twelve-note row, and it outlines another 'set' with equal prominence at the conclusion of the 'commentary' (bars 368-370). As this passage is a re-arrangement, minus voice, of bars 178/215, it clearly enhances the overall unity of the work.

In short, both Trakl and Maxwell Davies succeed in evoking an hallucinatory atmosphere, but they also highlight the divergences which arise between words and music when dealing with the less tangible aspects of 'reality'. In an important sense, Trakl's text aspires to the condition of music, as the spiritual element is 'developed' in a manner analogous to the 'spectre' in the opening paragraph. The phrase: 'and a dark cloud hung about my head' ('und eine schwarzliche Wolke umhüllte mein Haupt') recalls the 'smoke-corroded beams', and there is a link between the 'crystalline tears of fallen angels' ('kristallinen Tranen verdammtter Engel') and the wine tasting 'more bitter than opium' ('bitterer als Mohn'). By contrast, Maxwell Davies's setting gradually abandons the dramatization of the poet's consciousness after the first paragraph. There is a perceptible slackening of tension during the episode devoted to the second paragraph of the poem, especially when the removal of the loudhailer after the words 'the shadows of the

elm trees' ('die Schatten der Ulmen') (bar 296) leads to music of greater stability, for example, bars 298/318. In the final bars (371/374), tranquillity is achieved as the music is reduced to voice, bassoon and bell-percussion for the setting of the concluding paragraph. This reflects the religious interpretation of the poem whereby the violent 'expressionism' is transformed into the realm of metaphysical experience as its metaphors are crystallized into symbols of redemption. By distilling the music into two strands of melody accompanied by a halo of bell sounds, Maxwell Davies dispenses with the element of ambiguity which is still present in the text.

Accordingly, the final bars show Maxwell Davies avoiding the problem experienced by Schoenberg when dealing with texts which ignored the conventions of 'realism' by separating his compositional technique from the explicit demands of the poem. The vocal writing foreshadows the style the composer has subsequently adopted in many of his Mackay Brown settings, but the re-integration of his creative personality was not accomplished until he discovered that the objective detachment of Mackay Brown's texts enabled him to achieve an equal measure of consistency throughout his settings. Mackay Brown's approach to traditional narrative has provided the basis of a close association between compositional method and word-setting.

Revelation and Fall was not an isolated example of Maxwell Davies attempting to develop his style by exploring different aspects of tradition, but was followed by a number of works whose objectives were similar, even though they were expressed through different genres. St Thomas Wake and Vesalii Icones were unusually significant in this respect.

## Section 2 St Thomas Wake; Vesalii Icones.

St Thomas Wake and Vesalii Icones are prophetic insofar as they foreshadow many of the features Maxwell Davies was able to incorporate into his music once he realized that the technique associated with his settings of Mackay Brown texts could generate largescale 'symphonic' structures. They are also linked to other Maxwell Davies scores of the later 1960s which, in various ways, as Michael Chanan has observed, all show the composer's ambivalent attitude to the music of the past. He argues that in general terms, this ambiguity arises from the fine distinction between 'realization' and 'parody', and its significance is enhanced by the fact that the composer's choice of pre-existing music has<sup>34</sup> generally been associated with 'themes of faith and belief'. In this connection, Chanan cites 'Antichrist' as the work in which this conflict is first made explicit and quotes Adrian Leverkühn in Thomas Mann's Doktor Faustus (page 76) to illustrate our 'habit of assimilating the new, taking the sting out of it, finding melody and even

harmony where at first there seemed to be none. 'Bach's problem', says Leverkuhn . . . was this: 'how is one to write pregnant polyphony in a harmonic style? With the moderns, the question presents itself somewhat differently. Rather it is: how is one to write a harmonic style that has the appearance of polyphony? Remarkable, it looks like bad conscience - the bad conscience of homophonic music in the face of polyphony. This problem of conscience arises out of the contradiction between the association of polyphony with the other-worldliness of religious faith, in itself opposed to the hypocritical worldliness of the Church and of homophony with secularized post-Renaissance humanism.''.<sup>35</sup>

Chanan adds that Leverkuhn's 'homophonic' hearing also<sup>36</sup> conflicts with 'pre-harmonic polyphony'. In Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé', Maxwell Davies's use of the disturbing effects resulting from the confrontation between the old and new styles of polyphony symbolizes the disintegration of the Church. In St Thomas Wake, the same technique is used to symbolize the fragmentation of society to the extent that the orchestral interpolations between the foxtrots, and even the foxtrots themselves, interpolated between the main orchestral episodes, parallel the vocal (formerly electronic) incursions in the earlier work. The results tend to encourage a 'Marxist' interpretation in which the foxtrots have a 'clear social function, music you can rely on, the standardized music of planned production', as outlined by T. W. Adorno: 'standardization means the strengthening of the lasting

domination of the listening public and of their conditioned reflexes. They are expected to want only that to which they have been accustomed and to become enraged whenever their expectations are disappointed and fulfilment is denied''.<sup>37</sup> Thus, Chanan suggests that by undermining the traditional role of the foxtrots, Maxwell Davies stresses the conflict between the individual and society, rather than any strife within the individual's own psyche. Since writing his article, Chanan's 'reading' of the work, according to which 'the same dominant ideology which fails to recognize the separation of Church and religion also fails to recognize the social signification of music',<sup>38</sup> has largely been borne out by the composer's subsequent career. Maxwell Davies's move to the Orkneys was the logical outcome of 'the relentless exploration to extremes' and the realization that the resulting 'dead ends do not belong within the composer's psyche. They are present in the ideological repression from which we need to escape'.<sup>39</sup>

Maxwell Davies's preoccupations of the late 1960s reflected the extent to which the prevailing isolation of British music, previously mentioned by him,<sup>40</sup> had been eradicated. One of the strongest manifestations of the period was the use of what has been described as 'ready-made music'.<sup>41</sup> Together with the turbulent 'expressionism' of Bernd Alois Zimmermann,<sup>42</sup> or the 'stream of consciousness' technique adapted from James Joyce by Luciano Berio in his Sinfonia,

Maxwell Davies shared a concern for the way in which perceptions of 'time' and 'reality' were influenced by social and literary, as well as musical, considerations. Besides the growing conviction that the activities of the avant-garde bore little relationship to contemporary society, the addition of textual or dramatic elements demanded a more flexible approach to 12-tone composition as it had been interpreted by the post-war 'dodecaphonic' composers, who adopted Webern as their model. Yet Reinhold Schubart's observation that post-war developments were the result of 'repeated and often very fruitful misunderstandings of Schoenberg's and then Webern's innovations'<sup>43</sup> has subsequently been supported by Hans Moldenhauer's contention - based on a detailed knowledge of the programmatic aspects of the sketches - that 'there is nothing absolute in Webern's music'.<sup>44</sup> The 'misunderstandings' involved an under-estimation of the role of literature in breaking down the 'tonal' hierarchy, and for composers in the late 1960s, such considerations again assumed paramount significance as the limitations of 'total serialism', as well as aleatoricism, became apparent. All three composers were attempting to create an equilibrium between the linear and cyclic aspects of 'time' and 'reality', which belong among the various examples of 'binary oppositions' cited by Berio.<sup>45</sup> The connection with the opposition between metaphor and metonymy, discussed in relation to Revelation and Fall, can be seen in Maxwell Davies's attempt to create some kind of 'narrative'



focus in his non-vocal works. Besides the links with Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé', both St Thomas Wake and Vesalii Icones developed the principle of alternating sequences of contrasting material, both derived from a single source, to create a 'drama' in which the respective styles were given a distinctive identity. In place of the vocal sections and instrumental 'commentaries' of Revelation and Fall, the composer juxtaposed what he has described as his own music with a familiar style: foxtrots in St Thomas Wake, Victorian hymn tunes in Vesalii Icones, signifying, respectively, the corruption of social and religious values. Each constitutes a separate 'narrative' whose reflection constantly modifies the other, especially the incursions of parody into Maxwell Davies's own music. This technique was inspired both by James Joyce's method of allowing a character's awareness of his 'subjective' (internal) 'reality' to unfold in parallel with his perception of 'subjective' (external) 'reality', as well as the impossibility of distinguishing between 'truth' and 'falsity'. Both works reached an inconclusive resolution while presenting the various ingredients of the composer's style that were to be integrated once he had devised a means of restoring the element of 'narrative'.

#### St Thomas Wake.

St Thomas Wake does not use quotations in the literal

sense, in that although the foxtrots function as familiar 'objects', they are the composer's own derivations from the original pavan of John Bull. The comparison of the work with a 'dance of death' heralding the demise of civilization,<sup>46</sup> given credence by Maxwell Davies's admission that it reflects wartime memories of broadcasts of dance music while air raids were taking place, emphasizes the metaphorical aspect. Particularly important in this respect is the element of parody, exemplified by the exaggerated manner of playing the foxtrots. It underlines this interpretation by placing the composer's intention of reviving two extinct dance forms in an ambiguous light, for a major feature of the work is the composer's enthusiasm for these forms. Accordingly, St Thomas Wake is also a metaphor for the re-generative process whereby traditions are renewed, though again, ambiguity is involved, for traditions are invariably distorted in the process of being revived. All the facets of the music which prefigure the various ways in which Maxwell Davies has re-integrated different elements of the past into his style relate to other aspects of the theme of re-generation explored by the composer in conjunction with the writings of George Mackay Brown. There are already indications of the technique which the composer was later to adapt to Mackay Brown's use of the multiple viewpoint, and this enables him to explore a number of 'binary oppositions': past-present; 'tonality'-'atonality'; rigorous organization-improvisation; 'serious'-'popular' music, etc. In the process, St Thomas

Wake generates considerable intensity, stemming from profound divisions in the composer's creative personality. Above all, there is the conflict arising from Maxwell Davies' dissatisfaction with the influence of the avant-garde and its failure to engage with contemporary social issues. Although the different elements of a multiple viewpoint had been established, the work did not offer a solution to this problem because its form scheme did not provide the means by which its diverse features could be unified. Within the work's overall cyclic structure, Maxwell Davies expanded the variation technique used in Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé' into a series of 'double variations', in which the respective 'ensembles' pursue their sequences largely independently of one another. The only concept which unites them is parody, for the exaggerated gestures associated with the foxtrots, such as the instruction to employ excessive vibrato, are also applied to the orchestral sections in order to satirize the preoccupations of the post-war avant-garde. As a result, the work is similar to Taverner in that the banal, or reactionary, and the 'revolutionary' features are depicted as opposing faces of the same coin. Only when the composer discovered that he could allude to 'symphonic' form without resorting to parody in response to Mackay Brown's poetry did it become possible for the multiple viewpoint to be combined with a more goal-oriented style. Consequently, insofar as the source material is not explicitly stated until near the end of the work, the scope of the 'variations' is only gradually

defined, and this also accounts for the work's tentative beginning. The origins of the music are deliberately obscured by the element of improvisation, and the improvisatory aspect establishes a link between the two 'dead' dance forms. The opening 'prelude' for honky-tonk piano is definitely related to the pavan, stated in the harp at letter (R). By means of jazz inflections, the pavan is elaborated both thematically and harmonically, occupying 31 bars instead of 17 bars, but some characteristics of the original are retained, including decorative flourishes and modal tendencies redolent of late-Renaissance English keyboard music. The close similarity of the two passages becomes apparent after a few bars of the 'prelude' when there is an allusion to the final cadence of the pavan, especially in the right-hand. Although the 'prelude' is extended for a further fourteen bars, the 'false' peroration at bar 17 reflects how closely Maxwell Davies adheres to the 17-bar pavan, complete with honky-tonk interpolations. The correspondences which occur in the initial seventeen bars are extended to similarities of notation. The gradual introduction of the 'band' during the opening bars establishes the identity of the dance material and consequently the 'tonal' aspect of the work.

The 'prelude' is more closely related to the foxtrots than to the orchestral material and the main sequence of five foxtrots is placed at the centre of the work. The majority

of them bear some resemblance to the conventional form of the foxtrot, in which an eight-bar theme is repeated, contrasted with a middle section (also eight bars) and stated a third time to complete a 32-bar structure. In St Thomas Wake, the foxtrots are symmetrically arranged to the extent that they constitute a largely self-contained entity. The outer members of the group are related by form rather than key. Each comprises a slow foxtrot of sixteen bars, followed by a 'double' in faster tempo of similar length. By contrast, foxtrots two and four share a key relationship - A major and E major respectively - rather than any formal similarity. The second foxtrot differs from the rest of the sequence in that it is the only one not based on a 16-bar structure. Each half consists of two six-bar phrases which are virtually identical except that the second phrase of the repeat section breaks down before it has been completed. Repetition is also a feature of the fourth foxtrot, but this conforms most closely to the 'standard' formula.

The central foxtrot functions as the pivot of an 'arch' and is the most fully developed of the group. Its structure is not entirely different from the fourth foxtrot but by virtue of its unique status as the only one to be cast in the minor, the switch to the major affords greater contrast, ensuring a more clearly-defined middle section. The 'ternary' aspect is enhanced by the fact that the central section presents substantially different material and, at

fourteen bars, is only two bars shorter than the 'A' section. Because the outer sections are based on an eight-bar theme which fails to achieve a complete resolution, the impact of the central portion is increased. The significance of this passage is that its position within the foxtrot reflects that of the foxtrot within the sequence and, by extension, the relationship of the sequence to the rest of the work.

The overall similarities between the foxtrots based on their references to the standard phrases of 1920s dance music, including the customary harmonic progressions, have their more complex counterparts in the large orchestral sections flanking the sequence. Although the first passage occupies more bars than its 'mirror' - bars 32 to 200 as opposed to bars 365 to 467 - it is only marginally longer in terms of 'real' time. This is the result of basing the second episode on quaver, or semiquaver units, for example, bar 402 ff., in contrast to the crotchet units of its predecessor. In accordance with this alteration, the repeated cymbal figures originally associated with the appearance of 7/8 bars recur in conjunction with 12/16 bars with their rhythm suitably amended. The orchestral textures of both passages are punctuated by repeated rhythmic figures on woodblocks and claves, as well as cymbals. Metal sheets and scaffolding are added for the second episode.

There are definite indications, particularly in the first

episode, that each cymbal entry initiates a cycle involving the associated percussion. These 'cycles' are variable in length and in the metrical values of the bars grouped around each occurrence of the 7/8 time signature, but certain groupings tend to recur. Accordingly, while the cymbal's principal motif is invariant, for instance, in bars 32, 41, 50, 58, 63, 83, 85, and increasingly thereafter, especially from letter (D), - bar 107 - it also has some additional figures which, like the woodblocks and claves, are less regular. There are suggestions that the pitch material is governed by variable patterns along similar lines, and some of these are characterized by a distinctive rhythmic profile. Examples include the clarinet figure at bar 107 which functions as an important 'motif' throughout the subsequent material up to bar 200, recurring in the violins at bar 163 and in piccolo, flutes, oboes and bassoon at letter (G) - 200. The material played by tuba and double-bass at bar 136 may be a 'simplified' variant. The trumpet's initial entry at letter (A) is repeated in modified form at bar 76 (violin) and again at bar 87 (also violin). The pitch contour of the violin entry at bar 36 is probably related to this, transposed up a semitone. The avoidance of rigid patterns makes it difficult to discern other derivations, but ensures that the improvisatory quality of the 'prelude' is retained, even when the orchestral writing reaches its greatest intensity. During the second orchestral episode, the clarinets' dotted motif is transferred to the horns (bar

383, etc.). Besides drawing on material from the previous orchestral section, there is some evidence that this passage refers to the interpolations between the foxtrots. These allusions are not literal, but they achieve a measure of prominence during the final culmination of the work after the double bar (bar 531). The huge chord at bar 532, comprising overlapping triads in a manner reminiscent of Stravinsky, is derived from the staggered entries between bars 223/230, while the chord at bar 533 relates to the material in bars 234/239. Material from the second interpolation (particularly bars 269/275) recurs in bar 534, but thereafter, such correspondences are difficult to detect. Nevertheless, they afford sufficient evidence to suggest a number of similarities between the organization of the foxtrots and the orchestral sections, and they help to outline the conflict between tradition and innovation which characterized Maxwell Davies's output during the late 1960s and lay behind the programme mentioned by Chanan.

It is doubtful whether Maxwell Davies would be as specific concerning the 'meaning' of St Thomas Wake as Chanan, but his decision to settle in Orkney enabled him to establish a different relationship to his adopted community than that of 'avant-garde composer'. George Mackay Brown provided a 'model' of the expressive freedom it was possible to achieve in such a community, and Maxwell Davies began to concentrate on those facets of St Thomas Wake which did not conform to



the new 'dominant ideology' of 'total serialism'. One of the most important ways in which St Thomas Wake contradicted the prevailing 'modernist' aesthetic was through the composer's emphasis on reviving, rather than rejecting the past. It presaged a number of works in which diverse traditions have been integrated, including elements of popular and folk music. Maxwell Davies has denied that the 'band' could be regarded as a concertante group, yet he has since developed the idea of juxtaposing contrasting ensembles in his Sinfonia Concertante, where the solo wind quintet functions as a 'concertino' while the strings form the 'ripieno'. Sinfonia Concertante constitutes the opening 'panel' of a triptych, and the influence of St Thomas Wake extends to the concluding 'panel' in that the opening movement of Sinfonietta Accademica refers prominently to the traditional reel and Strathspey. Popular forms occur in other works, such as the school operas and are frequently associated with an element of satire (The Yellow Cake Revue). A 'pop group' figures prominently in the opera, Resurrection, where its role is predominantly satirical.

Since encountering the writings of George Mackay Brown, Maxwell Davies has restricted the use of parody to very specific occasions. One of the most important instances so far has been Black Pentecost, inspired by a threat to the Orkney environment. The idea of reviving two 'dead' dance forms was transformed into a protest designed to preserve a

living tradition, and the more subversive aspects of St Thomas Wake were adapted to the dramatization of Mackay Brown's fictional account of the destruction of a village selected from the novel, Greenvoe. As in the earlier work, the tension in Black Pentecost is generated from the conflict between two types of material derived from the same source. The interaction between the two themes, presented simultaneously on strings and alto flute respectively, after the introduction, is analogous to that of the orchestra and 'band' in St Thomas Wake, in that they prevent the music acquiring a definite focus. Like its predecessor, Black Pentecost has a multi-layered texture, and in Chapter 6, this will be seen as having a particular significance in the presentation of the multiple viewpoint. The essential difference is that Black Pentecost has a clear narrative outline drawn from the novel, also demonstrating the extent to which the composer has assimilated Mackay Brown's technique in his earlier settings. This feature proved decisive in the creation of the Symphonies, involving the revival of another facet of the 'classical' tradition, in that the 'tonal' element of St Thomas Wake has been incorporated as a series of 'tonal centres', articulating the principal 'landmarks' of extended structures. Yet while Mackay Brown provided the main impetus towards a greater emphasis on narrative, Maxwell Davies had already attempted to introduce this element into his music-theatre works, particularly Vesalii Icones.

### Vesalii Icones

The choice of the Stations of the Cross as the basis of Vesalii Icones meant that the 'narrative' aspect of the work's structure was pre-determined. Yet because of the many levels of association with Taverner, the 'narrative' had to contend with the other characteristics of the opera and its satellite scores: parody, distortion, and a degree of ambiguity that inevitably led to fragmentation. Thus, one of the connecting threads of the work is a 'wheel of jingles', which concludes each movement and is heard in conjunction with an arpeggiated chord of increasing size, and therefore of duration, as the work proceeds. At its culmination, this chord includes the so-called Taverner<sup>47</sup> chord - D E F sharp G sharp - whose whole-tone characteristics prove to be a major influence on the harmonic language of the work. As a result, the fabric of the music is unstable, reflecting the extent to which the themes of the opera preoccupied the composer. Equally significant is the use of a compositional 'device' with metaphorical associations. In his subsequent works, Maxwell Davies has shown a preference for texts in which the narrative element has metaphorical implications. It has become the means of unifying groups of works, as well as individual pieces, whereas in Vesalii Icones, unity was achieved at the cost of a level of ambiguity that Maxwell Davies has since found

unacceptable. Ambiguity remains an important facet of his creative personality, but it has been increasingly expressed purely through the music, rather than through extraneous elements: parody, quotations, or the addition of dramatic and visual features with their own symbolic content.

Vesalii Icones is ambiguous to the point where it conveys different 'meanings' depending on whether the spectator concentrates his attention on the music or the theatre. For instance, some of the starker aspects of the 'passion' are associated with music of cloying sentimentality, and this kind of disjunction is one of the most pervasive features of the score. The extent to which this can be regarded as symptomatic of a stylistic crisis on the part of the composer can be gauged from the fact that the following year (1970) was one of the least productive of his career, yielding only an unpublished ballet score, two re-workings of earlier material, and a 'realization' of a Buxtehude cantata. A similar hiatus had occurred corresponding roughly with the completion of the first act of the opera Taverner, and following the composition of the Seco Taverner Fantasia (1965), prior to the expressionist outburst of the later 1960s, but it was characterised by different circumstances. Maxwell Davies's early style was disintegrating in response to the intensity of the new subject-matter and his introduction of parody into the opera, but his technique remained intact, so that Revelation and

Fall was based on the same pre-compositional material as the Second Fantasia. By contrast, the later interregnum corresponded with the completion of the opera, as well as the associated works. thus his treatment of the Stations of the Cross in From Stone to Thorn differs substantially from Vesalii Icones, because setting Mackay Brown's text meant dispensing with parody. As a result, From Stone to Thorn inaugurates the process of stylistic integration, enabling Maxwell Davies to recapture some characteristics of his early scores.

It is the transitional aspects of Vesalii Icones which give the work its particular significance. The contrast between the composer's 'real' music and his use of parody or distortion indicates that he was still preoccupied with the question of distinguishing between 'truth' and 'falsity', but whereas in St Thomas Wake the conflicting styles were clearly separated, in Vesalii Icones the levels of plainsong, popular music and Maxwell Davies's own music derived from the other two are more closely integrated. Following Taverner, which had formed the culmination of both the early and the 'expressionist' phases of the composer's development, he began, in Vesalii Icones, to explore the potential of narrative and metaphor in a purely instrumental composition, capable of conveying its meaning independently of its theatrical aspect. The concertante role allotted to the cello is important in this respect in that

its function as the 'alter ego' of the dancer is comparable with the identification of the violin with the Virgin Mary in Le Jongleur de Notre Dame, or that of the horn with the interrogator in The Lighthouse.

Accordingly, Vesalii Icones initiated a trend where the metaphorical element is dramatized so that it is no longer restricted to Maxwell Davies's compositional procedures as in Taverner, Act 1, Scene IV, or 'Antichrist', where, as David Roberts has observed, the listener cannot be expected to follow all the technical processes involved, still less the fact that the construction of the music has been determined by a metaphorical, or symbolic 'programme'. In addition to the use of 'transformation processes' as metaphors for dramatic and other purposes,<sup>48</sup> reference is made to the Second Taverner Fantasia involving a symbolic link between 'transformation processes' and the developmental procedures of traditional 'sonata-form'. Vesalii Icones combined these different uses of metaphor by associating a Christian ritual with its overall structure and using specific features of the Stations of the Cross to symbolize the progressive distortion of Christian doctrine since the Reformation. The<sup>49</sup> composer's programme note cites movements 6, 8, 11 and 14 as particularly important examples of the music reflecting the work's metaphorical content but this principle is outlined at the beginning of the score where the cello states the basic pitch material while the dancer proclaims the

underlying rhythmic pattern of the work. Moreover, the symbolism drawn from the Vesalius engravings in De Humanae Corporis Fabrica, involving the depiction of the human body in terms of progressively deeper layers of muscle structure, is paralleled by the 'transformation processes' which increase in complexity as the work proceeds.

Besides stating the material on which the work is based, the opening movement gives some indication of the compositional procedures to which it will be subjected. Michael Taylor shows that the cello's opening phrases: a' sharp f sharp c' e'' g' sharp, followed by its inversion with the final pitch altered: c' e'' a'' sharp f' sharp d'', constitute a whole-  
50  
tone scale (fig.3). Equally significant is the improvisatory character of the first seven bars as throughout the work, passages including freely notated elements are contrasted with strictly organized contrapuntal episodes. Thus the passage between bars 8/38 is more rigorously constructed. The material previously played by the cello is repeated by the flute and forms the basis of three canons. In the first canon, the xylophone has the retrograde of the flute part. Its first four notes correspond to the equivalent pitches of the flute's initial five-note group in such a way as to produce tritones, while group to form another tritone. Further tritones are created as the xylophone plays notes 6 to 9 of the flute part in retrograde, and the same result is obtained through the correspondence

between the last pitch of the xylophone's second group and the equivalent of the flute's first group. The next six notes of the flute part are mirrored by the xylophone in terms of interval, rather than pitch. Tritone harmony continues to predominate and is extended to the basset-clarinet and piano parts. The second canon, beginning at bar 21, is again in retrograde, transposed by a tritone, but on this occasion the xylophone has the same intervals as the flute in its prime version except that its part is transposed down a semitone and is compressed into fewer bars. The third canon is the most complex: the clarinet has the retrograde version of the flute part transposed up a minor sixth; the glockenspiel has the prime version transposed by a tritone; the xylophone has the retrograde version transposed up a tone; the piano plays inversions of prime and retrograde. The whole-tone cello phrase separating the canons constitutes the first indication of parody in that it is derived from Ecce Manus Tradentis. It also performs a unifying function insofar as it recurs in distorted form in movement 8.

Michael Taylor establishes a connection between the first two movements by showing that the xylophone begins the second by playing 'the retrograde form of the last canonic line'.<sup>51</sup>

Another link is through the continuing influence of the tritone, particularly in the viola part, though for Taylor, the xylophone part has the additional significance that it provides the basis of his interpretation of the composer's



use of 'transformation processes'; observing that this figure 'is developed in several other passages', he describes the results obtained from transforming one xylophone line into another as 'modulators'.<sup>52</sup> According to Taylor, the intervals between the successive pitches of the 'modulator' correspond to the intervallic changes between the equivalent notes of the respective xylophone passages. Thus, the first two notes of the first xylophone line, C flat to E flat, comprises an interval of a major third, while the interval between the first two notes of the first 'modulator', B and C sharp, is only a major second. The corresponding interval in the second xylophone line is reduced accordingly, yielding D flat/E flat. Similarly, the second and third notes of the first xylophone line consist of a descending fifth, E flat/A flat, and because the interval between the second and third notes of the 'modulator' is again a major second, B/C sharp, the corresponding notes of the second xylophone line comprise a descending fourth, E flat/B flat. The third and fourth notes of the 'modulator' are the same, hence there is no change to the interval between the equivalent notes of the respective xylophone lines.

The use of pitches as transforming agents instead of a numerical arrangement can easily be understood, but David Roberts criticized Taylor's hypothesis on the grounds that the representation of 'patterns of transformations between

sub-units of a process as successions of pitch-classes . . .  
lays too much stress on the transformation of one complete  
sub-unit into the next and disguises the continuity of the  
patterns of transformation throughout the process.'<sup>53</sup>

Roberts's knowledge of Maxwell Davies's subsequent  
compositional development has enabled him to demonstrate that  
'transformation processes' are not confined to individual  
instruments, yet his comprehensive analyses of the composer's  
technical procedures have not precluded other  
interpretations. They all stress Maxwell Davies's  
inexhaustible facility for contrapuntal manipulation, but  
none succeeds in explaining how this facility yields music of  
such diverse styles. The conclusion must be that while  
Maxwell Davies's technique ensures that he is able to realize  
his intentions, the individuality of each work is determined  
by 'higher level decisions' stemming from extra-musical  
considerations. The 'programme' of movement 8 is a clear  
example. It was made possible by the fact that the dancer  
expresses neither the Vesalius drawings nor the Stations in  
literal terms, but creates 'an abstract from both', exploring  
'the technical possibilities suggested by the Vesalius  
illustrations in the light of the ritual and emotional  
experience suggested by the 'Station' in terms of his own  
body'.<sup>54</sup> Because the music was also conceived  
independently of the dancer, concentrating on the links  
between the fragments of Good Friday plainsong chosen by the

composer, his Ecce Manus Tradentis, Missa Super  
'L'Homme Armé', and his personal style at the time of  
Vesalii Icones, he was able to use the combined  
Vesalius/'Stations' images to explore the full range of his  
compositional preoccupations. The principle of reviving two  
'dead' dance forms in St Thomas Wake was extended in  
relation to the facial image on St Veronica's cloth. The  
symbolic association with a Daguerreotype reproduction gave  
rise to transformations of the various musical ingredients  
into an equivalent style. The implications were developed  
from the sixth movement, where the same style is heard in the  
context of a 'garbled Victorian hymn', regarded by the  
composer, as we have seen, as 'almost the ultimate  
<sup>55</sup>  
blasphemy'. Both forms of distortion reinforce the  
composer's equation of the Victorian era with the cheapening  
of religious and artistic values, and the degeneration of the  
two traditions is emphasized by the inclusion of a passage  
from a L'Homme Armé Mass by Pierre de la Rue. The  
subsequent 'analysis', and final reduction to a music-box  
jingle, following the subjection of the opening of the  
movement to further distortion by replaying an incorrectly  
balanced recording, completed a process of fragmentation  
previously applied to other quotations. Ultimately, the  
'programme' of the eighth 'Station' can be interpreted as a  
metaphor for the creative process, in that it suggests that  
the need to distinguish between 'truth' and 'falsity' is as  
important in defining a compositional style as it is in

relation to a system of belief. Insofar as there are metaphorical cross-references between the eighth 'Station' and other movements of the work, this interpretation can be extended to the entire score.

On the basis of Michael Taylor's brief outline of Vesalii Icones, it is evident that there are also musical links between movements, indicating a strong impulse towards unity at the level of pitch organization. Continuity is suggested by various features in addition to the 'wheel of jingles'. The idea of establishing a direct link between adjacent movements is extended to movements 2 and 3 in that the final viola chord of the former - comprising a D and G sharp - is taken up by alto flute and basset clarinet in the second bar of movement 3. Thereafter, this practice is abandoned in favour of longer range connections, some of which are indirect and tenuous, relying more on allusion than on precise correspondence of pitch or rhythm. Michael Taylor has pointed out that in the 'recapitulation' of the opening section of the second movement, the 'new material introduced by the piano foreshadows the sequence of chords on which movement 4 is built'.<sup>56</sup> He might have added that these chords recur in the fifth movement in an entirely different context and played in a different manner. He might also have mentioned that the percussion part in the ninth movement, involving an ostinato rhythm created by scraping a knife on a plate, alludes to the obsessive character of movement 4.

Furthermore, the shape of the clarinet line at the end of the ninth movement foreshadows its role in the dissolution of the foxtrot at the end of the work. Similarly, its 'sickly sweet' line in the middle section of movement 2<sup>57</sup> prefigures the salon music at the beginning of the eighth movement. Its influence is also apparent in the exaggerated glissandi shared between basset-clarinet and viola in the tenth movement, and in this connection, the starting and finishing pitches given to the two instruments for each glissando tend, in combination, to emphasize the interval of the tritone.

In the eleventh movement, the sentimental aspect of the work reaches its culmination. There is a 'false' resolution on D at bar 370 and the unpredictable progressions which follow create a subversive effect until the latent violence of the work is made explicit at bar 412. The composer stresses the piano's role, 'reducing to absurdity the chords suggested by the counterpoint to the basest currency of added sixths and dominant sevenths' ('I became very interested in this sort of musical ambiguity, where, because the music contains disparate, opposed elements, the total effect of these elements can be interpreted by the listener in different ways and on different levels, according to his means'<sup>58</sup>). The element of mockery implicit in the piano part recalls the sixth movement, while the complete absence of parody in the twelfth movement, together with the growing

tendency in the later movements to 'recapitulate' both types of material in close conjunction, enhances the ambiguous element of the music.

Thus, Vesalii Icones can be interpreted as analogous to the conflict between metaphor and metonymy discussed in relation to Revelation and Fall, but in strictly 'abstract' terms with the music only indirectly influenced by the Christian symbolism and its theatrical representation. Maxwell Davies subjects the metaphorical element, generally associated with the use of parody and quotations, to the same 'developmental' processes, or transforming operations, as the basic pitch and rhythmic material in an endeavour to achieve stylistic integration. The twelfth and thirteenth movements aspire to the style the composer has generally adopted for the majority of his 'Orkney' scores, and the latter presents a possible 'conclusion' by 'recapitulating' the three canons of the opening movement in modified form. In keeping with the abandonment of parody, the intervening cello solos are no longer quotations from Ecce Manus Tradentis; they comprise retrograde versions of one of the parts omitted from the canons. In almost all other essentials, the pitch material of the opening movement is repeated at its original level, the only difference being that the viola assumes the function previously allotted to the xylophone in relation to the alto flute. Even the improvisatory character of the cello part is re-established, reinforced by the apparently random movements

of a chain across the tam-tam, so that there is a strong feeling of the movement completing the cyclic arrangement outlined at the beginning of the work.

However, in order to illustrate the indistinguishability of 'truth' and 'falsity', the metaphorical element cannot be excluded from the conclusion of the work. The result involves an alternative 'ending', deliberately undermining the preceding music by reducing it to a fox-trot. In dramatic terms, the composer's departure from the conventional Stations of the Cross by depicting the resurrection of Antichrist encapsulates the themes of Taverner. In musical terms, the final foxtrot illustrates the incompatibility of parody with any notion of an integrated style. In short, Maxwell Davies had confronted a cultural problem similar to that outlined by George Steiner<sup>59</sup> in relation to literature, namely, a strong inclination to reject 'the primacy of the word'. This had profound implications for the Western tradition, including all forms of artistic expression, and was associated with a trend originating in the 17th century, whereby 'mathematics had evolved a world of numbers that gradually encroached on economics, history, sociology and, worst of all, philosophy to the point where such disciplines had become near<sup>60</sup> 'illiterate, or more precisely, anti-literate''. It was precisely this trend which Mackay Brown regarded as the principal legacy of the Reformation, undermining verbal

concepts and consequently removing language from 'the centre  
of intellectual and emotive life'.<sup>61</sup> It was in Mackay  
Brown's implacable opposition to this tendency that Maxwell  
Davies discovered the inspiration for his subsequent  
compositional development.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### Section 1 Fishermen with Ploughs'

At the time when Maxwell Davies was responding to the various issues raised by the composition of Taverner, Mackay Brown's expansion of his poetic evocations of Orkney life began to be directed towards analogous themes. His short story collections, A Calendar of Love (1967) and A Time to Keep (1969) show him experimenting with a wide range of narrative perspectives. The past is frequently re-created, often in terms of the language of a specific period, simulating the use of 'documentary realism'. The technique of presenting in counterpoint different periods of Orkney history is one of the means by which Mackay Brown has developed his individual view of the Islands' past. It involves applying Vico's cyclic theory of history to the 'reality' of everyday events: to the regular unfolding of the seasons and the rituals of ploughing and harvesting to which they give rise; to the perspective of human existence, as well as the longer and broader perspective associated with the many waves of settlers who have helped to forge the Orkney community. Virtually all his output can be related to a single fundamental theme: the contention that the decline of the local community of the past centuries is inextricably linked to the decline of

Western civilization, as a result of the abandonment of spiritual values in favour of materialistic 'progress'.

Yet such a decline conforms to the cyclic theory of history in that it presages a period of renewal. It enables the author to postulate the survival of the Islands even in the event of a nuclear disaster or war, when they will again become a haven for settlers escaping from such an event (usually symbolized in his work, along with various catastrophes of the past as 'the dragon') and consequently the 'cradle' of a new 'civilization'.

Mackay Brown's adaptation of the cyclic interpretation of history has a bearing on the flexibility with which time is handled in his writings. He does not suggest that past, present and future are 'simultaneous', but because many features of Orkney life have persisted over several centuries and the environment has only recently been threatened with drastic change, he has been able to create a 'world' where time appears to change very gradually: 'Time here, in the island, is a single day, repeated over and over . . . the same things: birth, love, death. The old die, the children come dancing into time' (The Well, Scene 7, Page 72). It is in this respect that Mackay Brown's writings aspire to Edwin Muir's notion of Fable in that they seek to preserve the spirit of the ballads and folk traditions, remnants of which have survived despite the

impact of the Reformation and the imposition of an alien culture in the name of 'progress'. Many of Mackay Brown's poems, short stories and plays allude to, or concentrate on, different episodes of the Orcadian past. Others focus on particular themes or 'characters', such as tinkers, in relation to the Islands' history.

The poetic sequence, Fishermen with Ploughs, in which Mackay Brown illustrates the theme of change by evoking the texture of life at key stages of Orkney history, remains the author's most ambitious attempt to encapsulate the Islands' chronological development, at least from the arrival of the Vikings. All his preoccupations are dealt with in this sequence as links are established between individual poems and between the individual parts of the collection. Each part is associated with a specific period, and every effort is made to ensure that all the poems can be regarded as distinct entities. An important factor is the variety of verse forms and poetic forms employed throughout the book, culminating in the final prose section. Nevertheless, as is made clear by Mackay Brown's preface summarizing the main events of each part, unity is achieved by associating all the poems with a single location and, on one level, by sustaining a clear historical narrative throughout the sequence, designed to emphasize the adverse effects of 'progress' on a small community. In support of his thesis, the poet alludes to the way English has changed over the centuries, from the austere,

formal verse of Part 1, using many characteristics of the Viking Sagas and old English, such as alliteration, to the series of monologues which conclude the book, recounting the new disaster and the tentative inauguration of a new cycle, based on the renewal of the Viking seafaring tradition. The narrative is brought full-circle, describing a pattern of resurgence and gradual decline, taking over a thousand years to complete. The implication is that poetry forms part of this process. It becomes a victim of 'progress' because it inevitably reflects the abandonment of folk and Christian traditions. These are concerned with the patterns within the overall cycle: the ceremonies denoting the chief 'landmarks' of human existence, or the seasonal events, such as ploughing and harvesting, upon which the community depends for its survival. They are responsible for maintaining man's relationship to natural phenomena and to the environment and their neglect is a symptom of degeneration. Throughout the first part of the sequence, there are suggestions that the natural disaster which impelled the Norsemen on their journey westwards to found a new community was linked to the demise of an old culture, stemming from a general disregard for its traditions and beliefs:

'And tribes decay. Northwards they seek cold fires.  
Our god at last was a glacier.'

Ultimately, their destiny is governed by fate ('The Blind

Helmsman'), or natural phenomena, over which there is no human control.

A similar outlook permeates the rest of the book, but in keeping with Mackay Brown's interpretation of Orkney history from a Catholic standpoint, the poetry achieves its fullest expression in those sections describing Rackwick as a flourishing pre-Reformation community, its imagery enriched by the infusion of Christian symbolism. Poetry and the other arts were unified with the Church in expressing the rituals of Orkney life, but following the Reformation and the advent of the concept of 'progress', they have become increasingly isolated from everyday experience. Consequently, the gradual draining of life from the valley is depicted not only through the dwindling poetic vitality, but also by the introduction of parody associated with the imagery and symbolism of the 'Reformed' church, as well as the language of the legal system and other aspects of British rule. Accordingly, the collection is concerned with other areas of distortion besides the falsification of religious 'truth'.

#### Part 1 - Dragon and Dove.

The opening poem fulfils several functions in relation to both the opening section and the entire collection. It epitomizes the sense of struggle as the Norse fishermen

prepare to escape from natural disaster and to adopt a new way of life. It is cast as a third person narration, though other 'voices' are introduced to illustrate the involvement of the whole tribe. The initial quotation represents the collective consciousness. It operates at a primitive level and is expressed through the most basic form of English poetry - the iambic pentameter. Its oracular status is further enhanced by the fact that it is separated from the rest of the poem. The key word is 'seed', signifying the instinct for survival, 'That blind rune'. It is characteristic that Mackay Brown should choose it as the basic unit of the sequence, for it is so fundamental to the generation of the new community and its new way of life that its literal and symbolic importance are indistinguishable. It echoes through the lines:

'Forge and anvil begot a host of rivets;

(Njal found, near falcons, an urn for his fires)'.  
'

The construction of the poem, with its stanzas, respectively, of 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 lines, following the opening 'oracle', hints at the formal nature of Viking society. It also reflects the manner in which the escape from the 'dragon' gathers momentum. The alliteration conveys the immense energy required to build the ship, while re-creating the sounds associated with its construction:



'Saws shrieked, sputtered, were sharpened, sang . . . .  
Dunes were pale with strument'.

Amidst the imagery and symbolism compressed into the poem, the phrase, 'Loomed the dry dove from June leafage', introduces the 'weaving' motif, and with its connotations of peace, it contrasts with the violence required to forge the ship:

'Thorkeld drove the hammers. Their hands bled.'

Number symbolism also makes its first appearance:

'Moons, seven fish, swam through that labour.'

The remaining poems of this section extend the imagery and symbolism outlined in Building the Ship. Their construction is based on permutations of the original line-scheme, involving twenty-eight lines divided into seven stanzas. In view of Maxwell Davies's use of similar permutatory procedures in conjunction with 'magic squares', Mackay Brown's scheme deserves elucidation in tabular form, since it combines with the element of narrative to give the section a feeling of unity:

Building the Ship - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7;

The Fight with the Dragon 5 6 4 3 1 7 2; 2 3 1;

The Blind Helmsman to Njal Thorkeldson the New

Chief - 5 1 3 7 4 2 6;

The Blind Helmsman to the Shipwright - 6 3 1 2 7 5  
4;

The Net - 3 4 5 1 6 2 7;

Gudrun - 1 3 6 4 7 2 5;

Whale - 3 4 5 7 6 1 2.

A variety of cross-references enhances the unity of this section with the 'voyage' motif creating a central narrative thread. The transition from fishing to agriculture is described from different perspectives, prefiguring subsequent parts of the sequence.

Nevertheless, because chronology is largely disregarded, the narrative element is of only minor importance, and the close integration of the nine poems is achieved primarily by means of imagery, symbolism, and an unusual emphasis on metaphor. The problems experienced by Maxwell Davies in dealing with this last aspect in his setting of Revelation and Fall almost certainly encouraged him to select a poem with a clearly defined linear structure for his first Mackay Brown setting. The first section would have demanded a large-scale conception, and when the composer turned to this aspect of Orkney history, it was in response to an alternative sequence of poems - less complex in form and content - specially written by Mackay Brown (Chapter 5, Section 2). Northrop Frye's observation that 'involved patterns of alliteration',

as well as a tendency for single lines to be cast as individual units (for instance, by means of end-stopping) 'are unmusical',<sup>1</sup> may also prove illuminating. Mackay Brown's assimilation of the style of old English, where this characteristic is strong and is supported by a pronounced, though not necessarily regular rhythmic accentuation, seems to have militated against the composer's fondness for subtle and complex rhythmic patterns as a means of creating a powerful impression of continuity.

## Part 2 - Our Lady.

There is a decisive change of style for the second section, whose four poems establish the patterns of imagery and symbolism which are modified and 'developed' in conjunction with the unfolding of Orkney history as portrayed in the three subsequent sections. Instead of relying on an overall design, each poem is given greater autonomy, so that a picture of everyday life as Mackay Brown imagines it over a period of centuries is built up in the form of a 'tapestry': 'Life went on for centuries in that way in Rackwick. Birth, love, labour, death - this was the rhythm of the crofter-fisherman's life generation after generation'.<sup>2</sup> The sea continues to exert a strong influence, but the imagery and symbolism of agriculture predominates, giving the poetry a pastoral quality, especially in this part, where it provides the basis of the form of Christianity Mackay Brown espouses.

The underlying idea of these poems is that Medieval Orkney society achieved a degree of integration between daily experience and the symbolic rituals of Roman Catholicism that has never been. It is an assumption that informs all Mackay Brown's work and from which his criticism of post-Reformation culture stems.

Stations of the Cross. The author regards Stations of the Cross as a crucial poem in his output.<sup>3</sup> It has subsequently been used as the basis of a series of 'variations' which comprise the final sequence of Winterfold, where the principle of relating different features of the agricultural cycle to the passion story is extended to include other aspects of Orkney life and the Biblical story, as well as to introduce the multiple viewpoint. As originally conceived, Stations of the Cross formulates the poetic language which Mackay Brown regards as appropriate to the regularity and apparent simplicity of Medieval Orkney life. The turbulence of the Viking 'world' has largely been dispelled, so there is no longer a need for alliteration or assonance. Most of the features to be found in a 'conventional' poem of any period are present in Stations of the Cross, but applied in such a way as to demonstrate the author's serious contemplation of the theory and techniques of 'modernism' before rejecting them. There is a regular rhyme-scheme, but its flexibility takes account of the sonic possibilities inherent in half-rhyme or near-rhyme. It is restricted to the second line of

each couplet. The rhythm is regular, insofar as each couplet has a long and a short line, but the disparity between individual lines is unpredictable, especially as the rhyming words tend to slow the reader, and, in addition, some of the shorter lines include relatively unfamiliar words derived from local speech: 'Quern on quern', 'Your rapt bairn'. Accordingly, the regular patterns established allude to traditional methods rather than relying on them. The implied connection between the rhyming sounds and the rhythm enhances the feeling of integration achieved in the poem, reflecting a community whose lives were bound by daily and religious rituals. The choice of such words as 'barleycorn', 'quern', 'barn', etc., explicitly relates the underlying pattern of construction to the processes of agriculture - as it was practised prior to the introduction of modern industrial farming - and the rhyme-scheme creates a 'tolling' effect which can be linked to the sound of distant church bells. The result is a 'sub-text' drawn from the agricultural and Christian imagery of each couplet, involving a series of metaphors of the generative process:

'To drudge in furrows till you drop  
Is to be born.'

Besides evoking the agricultural cycle in terms of the Stations of the Cross, the experience of crofting is embodied in such lines as:

'Foldings of women. Your harrow sweat  
Darkens her yarn.'

In keeping with Mackay Brown's other writings, a link is established between the passion story and local folklore:

'Scythes are sharpened to bring you down,  
King Barleycorn.'

The remaining five couplets comprise the climax and resolution of the poem in that the narrative thread linking the agricultural and Christian symbolism is increasingly brought into the foreground:

'The flails creek. Golden coat  
From kernel is torn.  
The fruitful stones thunder around,  
Quern on quern.'

In the concluding couplet, the completion of the harvest is associated with both the resurrection and the nativity:

'Angel, shepherd, King are kneeling, look,  
In the door of the barn.'

The poem fulfils the same metaphorical function as the

whole of Part 1. Its construction achieves a balance between the need to preserve the individuality of each Station of the Cross while emphasizing the overall unity of the Easter ritual. As such, it reflects both its own relationship to the structure of the book and, implicitly, the role of the individual within society. Both aspects are 'developed' in the subsequent poems of this section as key images acquire greater meaning through a gradual but systematic process of transformation.

Integral to Mackay Brown's method is the use of symbolism - particularly number symbolism - whose significance emerges within the context of community life. Its function is to unify the four poems of this section, to establish links with the preceding and succeeding sections, and to emphasize the unique balance between crofting and fishing which the author considers the most important feature of the Medieval Orkney community. It symbolizes the equally precarious balance between tradition and innovation which is the hallmark of the most enduring creative achievements and is one of the themes of the final poem in this section.

The traditional aspect of Helmsman is associated with an historically documented crusading voyage undertaken by the early Viking settlers, an account of which appeared in An Orkney Tapestry, as well as providing raw material for several of Mackay Brown's other works. The innovatory

element is concerned with the poet, Armod, one of the 'voices' encompassed by the multiple viewpoint, whose attitude expresses the questing nature of poetry:

'I am curious about their verse,  
The formal plots,  
Rose and marble and nightingale.  
This is not the poetry we know,  
The hawk's lonely station,  
Furling, fall, unfurling,  
Beauty clawed out of death.  
Put me ashore at the first tavern  
among their troubadours.  
I must study this rhyming.  
I am anxious concerning my craft.'

The poem can also be interpreted as a metaphor for the 'journey' through history, which has reached a decisive phase by the time of Part 3.

### Part 3 - Hall and Kirk.

After the idealistic 'portrait' of Medieval Rackwick, the third section makes explicit the fundamental theme that underpins a greater part of Mackay Brown's output: the conflict within society arising from the undermining of long-standing cultural and social traditions through the



intervention of external influences. This section covers the period from the Reformation to the Napoleonic era and the poetic language reflects the impact of the new theology, together with other aspects of British rule imposed on the Islands. There is a decline in the use of symbolism, while poems concerned with the collection of taxes or the conscription of crofter-fishermen for military service include elements of parody based on the infusion of bureaucratic terminology into local speech.

Part 3 begins by concentrating on what Mackay Brown regards as the distortion of religious 'truth' by the 'reformers' and then shows how the sinister effects of 'reformed' Christianity were extended to other aspects of community life. There is also a blurring of the distinction between poetry and prose. As in many of the short stories, a scene is sketched and it is left to the reader's imagination to draw the inevitable conclusion.

This technique is particularly evident in Witch, a poetic variant of Scene 5 of A Spell for Greencorn, as well as the short story, similarly entitled Witch (A Calendar of Love). Instead of the dramatic 'realism' of the former, or the documentary 'realism' of the latter, the poem re-creates Wilma's sudden disappearance as it is perceived by other inhabitants of the valley. The impersonal thread of narrative on which the poem is constructed is a good

example of the objective detachment which characterizes Mackay Brown's style. The satirical aspect appears in relation to the new legal system and in an epitaph signifying the demise of the community. The trend towards a prose style emphasizes the erasure of the local folklore and Catholic traditions, but in times of crisis, the resourcefulness of the community is accompanied by the revival of old ceremonies and beliefs (Bonaparte, The Laird and the Volunteers). The theme of betrayal is introduced in relation to the influence of Calvinism.

#### Part 4 - Foldings.

Despite the emancipation of the crofters in 1886, the pattern of dispersal which drained the community of its able-bodied members throughout the 19th century was intensified by the Scottish Education Act of 1872. The spread of literacy encouraged more Orkneymen to leave the Islands for further study or work. Part 4 deals with the brief period during which the revival of the old traditions seemed possible inasmuch as the rituals and folklore associated with crofting and fishing had survived, while the various changes outlined in the preceding sections had made little impact on the lives of the tinkers. Many of the poems have discernible rhyme-schemes and regular metres; they also contain elements of narrative. Yet in contrast to the first two parts, the poems are unified by images of death, rather

than symbols of renewal. The change is symptomatic of the acceptance of the notion of 'progress'. The post-Reformation view of history involved an increasing isolation from the 'timeless cycles of natural phenomena' familiar to the crofter, fisherman, or tinker as 'civilization' declines and mankind proceeds inexorably towards an uncertain future. Accordingly, the prevailing imagery of this section represents the distortion of 'reality', with a greater emphasis on technical considerations. This feature is exemplified in the construction of The Laird, and is extended to many subsequent poems. Each of its four seven-line stanzas adheres to a strict pattern based on rhyme or near-rhyme. Using the first stanza as the 'model', links are established between lines 1-4: 'me'-'tree'; 3-6: 'grass'-'lass'; 5-7: 'birds'-'words'. In the remaining stanzas, one of the pairings is less precise: Stanza 2, lines 5-7: 'trout'-'flute'; Stanza 3, lines 3-6: 'beard'-'word'; Stanza 4, lines 5-7: 'peat'-'net'. The second line of each stanza: 'Stone shield and sun dial' functions as a refrain, unifying the whole poem. There is considerable uniformity with regard to the number of syllables in the corresponding lines of each stanza.

Stanza 1: 6, 5, 8, 6, 5, 12, 4;

Stanza 2: 6, 5, 8, 6, 6, 10, 4;

Stanza 3: 6, 5, 8, 7, 5, 11, 5;

Stanza 4: 6, 5, 8, 7, 5, 10, 4.

Later in this part, the organization of Stations of the Cross is reproduced in Ikey's Day, except that it has only seven couplets. A gradually changing rhyme links the second line of each couplet, giving the poem a cyclic effect - 'hair'- 'prayer' - so that it corresponds to the earlier poem's references to the natural and Christian cycles. These include allusions to the Nativity, in that Ikey is portrayed as the perennial 'outsider'. The symbolism of the Nativity is also implied in A Jar of Honey, where 'realism' and ritual are inextricably mixed. It begins with a story narrated in prose, but as the reader is persuaded to identify with the young man 'in double isolation', he is drawn into a 'timeless ceremony', and hence into the realm of Fable.

A Warped Boat is an allegory for the decline of Rackwick. Its construction is determined by the need to distinguish between the 'voices' of the narrator and Willag. The poem's division into two units, with the first five lines functioning as an 'introduction', reflects the 'story' element, but the whole is unified by a complex rhyme-scheme. The 'introduction' is rhymed in two ways: Between lines 1-3 - 'pipe'- 'ripe', as well as 2-4 - ''fire'- 'year'. Additionally, the opening phrase of lines 1-5 are rhymed - a feature emphasized by their subsidiary character: 'As one would say'- 'With all that rain in May'. The main body of the poem (lines 6- 18) is divided into three four-line stanzas, plus an isolated final line, but the pattern whereby all but

one line is linked to another transcends this conventional arrangement: lines 6-10 - 'over'-'clover'; lines 7-15 - 'rowlocks'-'sillocks'; lines 8-18 - 'shore'-'more'; lines 9-11 - 'oats'-'goats'; 12-16 - 'again'-'men'; 14-17 - 'malt'-'salt'. The remaining line, line 13-'die' - corresponds to the spare line of the 'introduction', line 5 - 'dry'. Metrically, ten-syllable lines tend to predominate.

The growing tendency to group poems in contrasting, or complementary pairs, together with descriptions of increasing pollution and ruined crofts, all prefigure the mood of Part 5 by illustrating the extent to which the community has been transformed.

#### Part 5 - Stone Hawk.

The poems in this section reflect the progressive fragmentation of the Rackwick community during the first half of the 20th century in that the narrative thread is less pronounced both within individual items and as a unifying 'device'. This is in accordance with the author's contention that the art of story telling has largely been lost during the present century, arising particularly from the impact of the mass media, as well as the debasement of language - both adverse effects of 'progress'. Less emphasis is placed on recognizable rhyme-schemes or rhythmic patterns. The imagery and symbolism are bleaker, signifying that the community has

failed to shake off the negative influence of Calvinism, or to restore contact with the older Christian tradition, as the familiar rituals of everyday life are transformed. Ploughing and fishing feature less prominently and the poet shows that the spread of urban values has left the people with less time or inclination to observe the ancient ceremonies associated with death and re-generation. The pervasive feeling of decline is punctuated by fewer poems creating an element of contrast, while the occasional suggestions of the 'timeless' quality of the earlier sections of the sequence are designed to provide a broader perspective with which to compare the transient aspects of 20th century life. The opening poem indicates the extent to which all aspects of life have been reduced to a commercial transaction, so that by constructing a complex network of themes and symbolism, linking the individual items, Mackay Brown makes the demise of the community appear increasingly inevitable. The process reaches its apotheosis in The Drowning Brothers and Dead Fires, which, though separated by Fisherman's Bride, are obviously complementary. The event commemorated in The Drowning Brothers occurred in 1952 and was generally regarded as signalling the moment at which the remaining inhabitants of Rackwick should leave. The poem's significance stems from its subject-matter - the drowning of the last youthful members of the community - as well as the technique developed by Mackay Brown to create his 'memorial'.

In contrast to his other allusions to tragedies brought about by forces over which the Orcadians had no influence, for example, The Year of the Submarine, the approach in The Drowning Brothers is much more direct, reflecting the fact that even in the 20th century, a local event could have a greater impact on the islanders than the upheavals of international affairs. Yet by virtue of its construction, the poem also achieves a large measure of detachment that is characteristic of the author. The structure of the poem has three distinct levels based on the use of the multiple viewpoint. Inasmuch as the tragedy is contemplated from three different perspectives, the technique is analogous to that adopted in many short stories including A Treading of Grapes ('A Time to Keep' and Other Stories, Page 63), and A Winter Tale (The Sun's Net, Page 9). A similar organizing principle is employed in the novel, Greenvoe, where the daily routine prior to the destruction of the village is presented contrapuntally with the narration of the island's history and an initiation ritual symbolizing the 'crucifixion' and 'resurrection' of the corn.

The opening line of each verse is set apart from the remainder of the text. It includes a simile, placed in parenthesis, alluding to sculpture, so that a cumulative effect is created whose significance is not revealed until the closing lines of the poem. The sculptural images also influence the tone of each verse. At the other extreme,

there is an account of the tragedy conveyed through direct speech. This is presented as a series of quotations, progressively extended, becoming increasingly foregrounded with each verse. In addition to the brothers, most of the typical inhabitants of Rackwick appear, together with animals, birds, and some features of the landscape, which are portrayed as recognizable 'personalities'. The 'middle ground' is occupied by a past tense narration representing the authorial viewpoint. It is also concerned with the hills 'brooding over the scene'. In contrast to the brothers' description of the burn continually moving through space and time, they constitute a 'timeless' dimension against which the metamorphosis of the boys takes place. There is also a curious parallel with one of the themes in Tony Tanner's study of American fiction between 1950-1970, City of Words, published in the same year as Fishermen with Ploughs, where it is pointed out that one of the basic motifs of many post-war novels involves the dichotomy between those who react to society in a state of terminal decline by constantly changing their location in an attempt to escape, and those who adopt a passive existence in the hope that they will not be drawn

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into the maelstrom.

The sculptural references are to be understood in relation to the final couplet. They outline successive stages of the brothers' 'transformation' and develop the underlying metaphor of the poem whose subject is the creation of some



kind of permanent symbol in a world of constant change. Its division into three levels corresponds to various time cycles unfolding at different speeds. Within the overall pattern, the organization of the stanzas, respectively of 9, 6, 10 and 11 lines, with neither rhyme-scheme nor a clearly defined rhythmic pattern, suggests a measure of unpredictability. In the context of the entire sequence, these cycles may be regarded as the present, the historical past and the metaphysical. In this respect, the incident commemorated in The Drowning Brothers is no different from Mackay Brown's other descriptions of losses sustained by the community over many centuries. The patterns of theme, symbolism and imagery never change; it is particular circumstances, emphasizing different aspects of these patterns, which impart an arbitrary element to their manifestations. Thus, although The Drowning Brothers has special importance in that it signals the end of a chapter in the history of Rackwick, the fact that it presents features whose permanence is far greater than all man-made phenomena helps to explain the confidence with which Mackay Brown postulates some kind of future for Orkney, despite the images of desolation described in Dead Fires.

The use of the multiple viewpoint in The Drowning Brothers demonstrates the extent to which the distinction between poetry and the short story had been eroded. In Dead Fires, the prosaic style is enhanced by the virtual absence of human

activity. It is cast in the form of a 'survey' of the deserted crofts, thereby emphasizing the return of Rackwick to an uninhabited condition.

Part 6 - The Return of the Women.

This is another example of a tripartite structure, as well as the use of the multiple viewpoint, but instead of considering a single incident from different perspectives, it shows the unsuccessful evolution of a new community. The use of the dramatic monologue is in accordance with Mackay Brown's growing interest in the theatre. Following the example of James Joyce's female monologues at the conclusion of Ulysses and Finnegans Wake, Mackay Brown presents the final part of the sequence exclusively through the 'voices' of seven women. Each of the women has three 'speeches', corresponding to the structure of this section. They are among thirteen survivors who have reverted to a primitive form of existence which has little need for religion. In view of the author's number symbolism, the portents are unpromising because the figure thirteen has no Christian connotations and introduces an element of asymmetry into the organization of the community. The Christian significance of an old statue is not understood and the harvest fails. The community resorts to fishing, thus returning not to the cycle of activity initiated by the Norsemen, but that established by the first settlers, as

described in Hawk Fall and Solstice of Light. The skipper's assumption of authority shows that the concept of 'progress' has not been abandoned and will again lead to destruction.

## Section 2 - Maxwell Davies's Move to the Orkneys.

The fact that Maxwell Davies completed three important settings of texts drawn from Fishermen with Ploughs within three years of settling in Orkney (1971-1974) testifies to the impact of George Mackay Brown's writings on his music. Vocal music suddenly dominated the composer's output, including two other works indirectly attributable to Mackay Brown's influence, and two of his most substantial scores of 1975 were based on prose texts by the author.

Consequently, there has been a good deal of speculation as to the origins of the association between Maxwell Davies and Mackay Brown, but the composer's observations on the nature of Mackay Brown's achievement have been restricted to two brief statements. As these are not confined to the music/literary level, it is likely that a complete explanation will have to be left to posterity, assuming that Maxwell Davies's diaries and personal correspondence will then become available. Nevertheless, it is clear he considered their first meeting to be providential in that it occurred immediately after his initial acquaintance with

Mackay Brown's work. (It is known that the composer first visited Hoy while on holiday, and it is entirely characteristic that he would have sought information about the local culture, history, etc. before travelling to the Orkney Islands, in which case, Mackay Brown's An Orkney Tapestry can be seen as an ideal introduction, likely to stimulate Maxwell Davies's creative imagination. It may be assumed that the composer adopted a similar approach when visiting other places for the first time, but few regions are likely to boast such a vivid account of their lore and traditions as An Orkney Tapestry.)

Additionally, it is known that Maxwell Davies embarked on his settings of Mackay Brown's verse during this and subsequent visits to Hoy, before he bought and renovated the croft, Bunertoon, where he continues to live for most of the time.)

The poetry, the rugged landscape of Hoy and Mackay Brown himself all made a powerful impression: 'He doesn't say much and if you are talking with him you are inclined to talk about the quality of the home-brew or the whisky or to discuss things that might not seem very profound. But you know that there's a very tough intellect there, a first class mind and a first class poet. The extraordinary thing is the poetic language.

His novels use a language which is almost ritual language,

which you feel comes from the people, from the way they talk.<sup>5</sup> It echoes their cadences, the way they think'. On another occasion he referred to: 'the internal spring of rhythm and the images, too: they are not cluttered, and they give the musical imagination scope to explore them without crowding them out. And so often in George's work there is the cycle of the year expressed on the one hand in the natural seasons and on the other through the Christian legends and I find both very attractive - the attempt to come to terms with natural phenomena through these terms. That related to his message about the function of art, in 'The Blind Fiddler', I find very attractive indeed. And quite apart from that I almost can't read his work without imagining music: it just seems to ask for it'.<sup>6</sup> In these circumstances, it would have been untypical of Maxwell Davies if his steadily increasing identification with the Orkney environment had not given rise to a tangible change of direction, especially as this coincided with the development of a cultural reaction against the radical experimentation of the 1960s. The comparatively stable Orkney community, striving to uphold a traditional way of life that had existed for centuries, provided an alternative perspective from which to address problems associated with the relationship of the composer to his fellow musicians and to society. Accordingly, the reasons for the change are probably less significant than the character of the music to which it gave rise. By encouraging all aspects of musical awareness in the Islands, Maxwell Davies

showed that the isolation of the contemporary composer was partly a problem of his own creation. It was connected with the failure to recognize the inadequacies of many of the compositional methods influenced by 'modernism' in comparison with 'tonal' music. This was the basis of Maxwell Davies's violent reaction during the late 1960s and was followed by a more measured response. Creative energy needed to be sustained through the achievement of a more equal balance between feeling and intellect, and it was through his settings of Mackay Brown texts that Maxwell Davies infused an element of detachment into his style.

Maxwell Davies's compositional development was largely confined to non-vocal scores until he embarked on the music of Taverner, and once the opera had been completed, there was little scope for further development of the 'expressionist' language which had been devised in response to the exigencies of the drama. Following the composer's encounter with 'modernist' literature in Revelation and Fall and Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé', the discovery of Mackay Brown's work suggested an alternative approach.

The significant feature of the Mackay Brown settings is that while they display Maxwell Davies's continuing awareness of, and ambivalence towards, the post-war European avant-garde, they can be cited as having a distant relationship to the English song tradition through the

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influence of Tippett and Britten. Besides following their example in his use of pre-existing material, Maxwell Davies has profited from their different approaches to word-setting by adopting Tippett's manner of constructing texts from small fragments of prose or poetry, as well as Britten's preference for setting complete poems. However, whereas both his predecessors drew on a variety of sources in the majority of their works, Maxwell Davies has favoured a consistent approach, concentrating on single texts, whether by Mackay Brown or, recently, of his own creation in a Mackay Brown style. Even in vocal works with neither Mackay Brown nor Orcadian associations, this consistency has usually been retained, notwithstanding many stylistic changes in the music. It forms one aspect of his reaction against the 'expressionist' works associated with Taverner, and is in accordance with the consistent symbolism and imagery which transcends all considerations of genre or style in Mackay Brown's writings.

In the case of Mackay Brown, it expresses his commitment to what Douglas Dunn has called 'the Medieval core of what seems  
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a peculiarly Orcadian or Norse tradition of Christianity', in the belief that such a tradition could eventually be revived. Other personal preoccupations were almost totally excluded in keeping with the view that individuality should be subordinated to the expression of a communal identity.

Yet Maxwell Davies's identification with Mackay Brown's poetic outlook has not precluded the retention of some features of the 'expressionist' works. His extension of vocal technique employed by Monteverdi as a means of combating the expressive limitations of 'total serialism' is comparable with Britten's restoration of the melodic style of Purcell, allowing the voice to carry the emotional burden of the music. This contrasts with the emphasis on accompaniment in the overwhelming majority of early 20th-century English songs, influenced by post-Wagnerian harmony.<sup>9</sup> An illuminating comment concerns Maxwell Davies's recollections of local concerts during his childhood in which a piano was frequently used as an unsatisfactory replacement for missing orchestral instruments. Its failure to blend with the rest of the ensemble left a vivid impression, resulting in the composer's use of the instrument only in small groups involving mixed timbres, where it is generally treated as an extension of the percussion. This autobiographical reference clarifies the significance of the honky-tonk piano in St Thomas Wake, or the fact that the only vocal work with piano accompaniment is the set of cabaret songs, The Yellow Cake Revue, where the emphasis on traditional harmony is in accordance with the satirical nature of the text.

These are examples of Maxwell Davies adopting an "objective" approach to essentially disagreeable experiences in order



that they may serve a creative purpose, and the conflict of ideas concerned either with 'appearance' and 'reality', or the nature of religious belief, which characterized the most turbulent phase of his output, stemmed from the application of similar principles. In psychological terms, he 'distanced' the emotional aspects of experience in order that they could be sublimated to the creative impulse, but this provoked an element of ambiguity arising from the composer's tendency to identify with his chief protagonist: King George III, John Taverner, etc. The projection of significant facets of his persona into the dramatization of psychological crises experienced by historical or legendary figures corresponds to Mackay Brown's association of traditional features of Orkney culture with St Magnus and Storm Kolson (The Blind Fiddler). By concentrating on Mackay Brown's writings, it was inevitable that Maxwell Davies's creative imagination would be stimulated by the principal 'characters' of Orkney mythology, and his settings of texts from Fishermen with Ploughs, dealing with various aspects of community life, can be seen as an essential stage in this process.

Mackay Brown's writings are profoundly traditional in subject and style, yet they include features which express an European, rather than a British sensibility. Besides displaying a spiritual affinity with Scandinavian culture, their preoccupation with the agricultural cycle relates them to 'the ancient countryside forms' which, as

David Edgar has pointed out, still persist in some areas of  
the Continent but have been discontinued in Britain. <sup>10</sup>

Maxwell Davies's ties with European culture were more direct and less traditional. Despite rejecting the more extreme tenets of the avant-garde, Continental influences remained of paramount importance in his technical and stylistic development. In view of his ambiguous attitude to the piano, he was disposed to follow the example of many European composers in using a small ensemble as an accompaniment to vocal music. This proved appropriate for the pastoral qualities of the poetry in Fishermen with Ploughs.

Moreover, his cosmopolitan background enabled Maxwell Davies to approach Mackay Brown's writings from a perspective that was unavailable to the author. Some indication of the potential the composer could exploit can be gained from Douglas Dunn's appraisal of Mackay Brown's verse up to Fishermen with Ploughs. He suggests that the strengths and limitations of Mackay Brown's verse stem from the close links he has resolutely maintained with the Orkney community and his idealization of its past. Dunn argues that Mackay Brown's criticism of present-day urban society (complete with some form of nuclear 'retribution') in terms of an imaginative recreation of an idyllic Orcadian community was untenable because his notion of contemporary reality is unduly simplistic. It is also unsatisfactory in view of the assumption there must be almost total destruction as a prelude to a new start, and the restoration of his imaginary

'ideal'. Dunn adds that 'in his best work he solves all the problems of the poet who wants to be both bucolic, real, hard and Northern',<sup>11</sup> but his achievement is tempered by 'a general rejection of modernity'.<sup>12</sup> His mystical view of Orkney's place in the cosmos has obscured the 'reality' of the Islands' current condition and resulted in a lack of political engagement or direct social criticism on his part. Dunn concludes that in order to address the question as to how the situation could be improved, the poetry would need 'a harshness, an indignation that Brown might be unsuited by temperament, or poetic beliefs, to provide'.<sup>13</sup>

It is precisely these qualities which Maxwell Davies has gradually infused into his Mackay Brown settings. The composer realized that the possibilities latent in Mackay Brown's writings extended beyond the purely compositional problems of rendering words into music, to include various forms of community involvement. There are few indications of these wider implications in the song-cycles drawn from Fishermen with Ploughs, but after his spontaneous response to Stations of the Cross (From Stone to Thorn), Maxwell Davies concentrated on texts that depicted the growing desolation of Rackwick, thereby suggesting the commitment he was to bring to the preservation of Orcadian traditions by encouraging musical appreciation and music-making in the Islands. These works also enabled him to define the basis of his approach to Mackay Brown texts before developing it in subsequent scores

and adapting it to different genres. The close bond Mackay Brown has always maintained with Orkney people has clearly served as an example to Maxwell Davies, enabling him to make the transformation from a 'modernist' composer, operating in comparative isolation, to a more 'functional' musician, catering for a wide range of circumstances and performers of varying abilities. Parody, in its modern sense, was abandoned as a general stylistic feature and has since been used only for specific purposes (The Yellow Cake Revue, Black Pentecost). The new role adopted by Maxwell Davies, corresponding to Mackay Brown's practice of combining creative writing with providing a weekly column for the local newspaper, is akin to the author's portrayal of a fiddler creating music for 'dance and ceremony', especially in pre-Reformation society. Similarly, the stress laid on the audibility of Mackay Brown's words is in accordance with the importance ascribed to the sung text by such Renaissance<sup>14</sup> theorists as Ficino. It illustrates the extent to which the composer's rejection of 'modernism' in music was linked to his diminishing involvement with its literary manifestations.

A brief look at Frederick W. Sternfeld's Poetry and Music - Joyce's 'Ulysses',<sup>15</sup> will be sufficient to realize how the difficulties of matching sound and word have been exacerbated by 'modernist' texts. Besides the fact that the flow of the music will destroy the impact of the more complex allusions,

distortions and puns, the techniques frequently employed could not be reproduced in music without sacrificing meaning, unless supported by some form of stage presentation.

By contrast, Mackay Brown's close ties with the ballad tradition obviated the need for extra-musical clarification - hence the transition from music-theatre to song-cycle. Nevertheless, 'modernist' influences were not entirely obliterated and, by concentrating on smaller ensembles, Maxwell Davies was exploring similar territory to Boulez or Berio. Indeed, his approach to Mackay Brown's writings can be regarded as a compromise between their respective positions. Whereas Berio maintains that 'music allows one to further augment the semantic capacities of language' insofar as, like verbal language, it is able to function as a 'machine that amplifies and transcribes . . . meaning onto a different level of perception and intelligence, provided that it respects all the aspects of language, including the acoustic one',<sup>16</sup> Boulez asserts 'it is not a question of heightening the power of a poem but, frankly, of hacking it to pieces'. His contention that 'the poet . . . will not even recognize his text when it has been treated in this way'<sup>17</sup> is borne out by Maxwell Davies's recollection of Mackay Brown's first reaction to From Stone to Thorn: 'When he heard the music I think he was a bit surprised but he was very nice about it and prepared to collaborate with me afterwards'.<sup>18</sup> On the one hand, Maxwell Davies seeks the

equilibrium between words and music of which Berio speaks - citing Mozart and Schubert - where 'poetry and music move symmetrically and analogically, not only on the rhetorical level, but also on that of langue and parole';<sup>19</sup> on the other hand, he tries to accommodate both the aesthetic and 'polemical' aspects of Mackay Brown's texts. This is apparent in From Stone to Thorn, where the handling of the voice and the disposition of the ensemble introduced new sonorities into British vocal music.

### Section 3 - Fishermen with Ploughs: The Song-Cycles.

#### From Stone to Thorn.

The intensity of Maxwell Davies's response to Stations of The Cross<sup>20</sup> can be gauged from the speed with which he set the poem. It marks the abandonment of the fragmentary style of the later 1960s, including parody, distortion, hymn-tune quotations and foxtrots, in favour of the consistency of the composer's earlier works. The obvious comparison is with Vesalii Icones. From Stone to Thorn (1971) is scored for mezzo-soprano, basset clarinet, harpsichord, guitar and percussion, and the instrumentation is largely devoid of extraneous elements. There are no theatrical or visual 'props'. Mackay Brown's preference for monosyllabic words, whose sounds often betray their Anglo-Saxon origin, has encouraged a return to a melismatic vocal style, and there

are few indications of the hysteria associated with Taverner. Violent gestures and 'expressionist' vocal writing are used sparingly and the only unusual feature is a complex swishing sound produced by moving a clock spring up and down so that the metal coils rub together. The guitar and harpsichord complement each other, creating a mild ambience which modifies the impact of the remaining instruments. They reflect the pastoral qualities of the poetry, while enhancing the audibility of the words. The extent to which stylistic integration is achieved can be gauged from the absence of a clear distinction between foreground and background.

The composer's reliance on plainsong fragments, as opposed to other forms of pre-existing material, was another factor which led to a greater consistency of style. The choice of the Dies Irae plainchant previously used in Worldes Blis and the music for Ken Russell's film, The Devils, together with Victimae Paschali Laudes, introduced at the end of Taverner, was appropriate for poetry symbolizing death and renewal in both its agricultural and Christian aspects. The fact that this is a recurring motif in Mackay Brown's output was reflected in Maxwell Davies's frequent use of the same sources throughout the 'Orkney' period, thereby ensuring considerable continuity. The compositional method generally involves transforming one plainsong fragment into the other by systematically altering its pitch and rhythmic contours, but the identity of the original material is rarely stated in

recognizable form.

Mackay Brown's fourteen couplets, each prefaced by a heading in accordance with the appropriate 'Station', are reduced to a single span of music in which the vocal settings of the text are interspersed with instrumental 'commentaries'. In some instances, the 'postlude' to one section also functions as the 'prelude' to the next, but in others, a more precise division is indicated. The instrumental episodes are not illustrative and, to some extent, proceed independently of the vocal sections. Nevertheless, their accompanimental function means that they are closely integrated with the vocal music.

In the opening bars, the basset clarinet is established as the instrumental counterpart to the singer, its initial gesture, comprising a descending minor ninth, followed by an ascending fourth, being taken up by the voice. Although each proceeds along a different path, the angular vocal melodies, stemming from the predominance of wide intervals, abrupt changes of tempo and 'atonal' language, are instrumental in conception. Conversely, the textual variety obtained from the small ensemble demonstrates an equally powerful response to the lyricism of the poetry, though the accompaniment is less austere than in the Leopardi Fragments. The rhythmic flexibility of the vocal line is also greater than in the earlier score as a result of the freedom with which Maxwell



Davies approaches the strictly organized couplets. By means of 'recapitulatory' elements, From Stone to Thorn suggests the coherence Maxwell Davies has subsequently achieved in his 'symphonic' works. Some of the 'Stations' are linked to create the impression of distinct 'movements' within the overall structure, but these are off-set by continuous transformations which transcend such divisions. A melody for glockenspiel, originally heard in conjunction with harpsichord, woodblocks and bell chimes in the second 'Station', recurs in a transformed and expanded version prior to the ninth 'Station', supported by guitar. In its latter guise, it illustrates the composer's preoccupation with dance forms, which is allowed full expression in response to the symbolism associated with King Barleycorn. The importance of the dance element is one of several instances where the influence of Vesalii Icones can still be discerned, despite the radical change of style and the eradication of almost all grotesque features. There are various appearances of the bell-tree, as opposed to the wheel of jingles in the earlier work, while the instrumental episode preceding the sixth 'Station' is similar in mood and texture. This is sustained until the conclusion of the eighth 'Station'.

Following an 'introduction' comprising the first two 'Stations', From Stone to Thorn divides into two halves, each heralded by the glockenspiel. This scheme is not followed literally in that the second half is more complex and

extended than the first, but an overall symmetry is suggested with the music of the last two 'Stations' representing a transformation of material from the second 'Station'. This is in accordance with the poem and the ritual from which it is derived, in that the cross is replaced by the sepulchre - symbol of the Resurrection.

The care taken over the choice of vocal and instrumental textures is another aspect with which the composer has been increasingly preoccupied. The extended vocalises on 'Lord' (second 'Station') and 'borne' (fifth 'Station') recur in Section 2 of Westerlings, where 'Oarsmen' gradually surfaces from the chorus of vowel sounds. The full ensemble is only used occasionally, with the instrumental group generally being deployed in smaller complementary groups. An example is the textual interplay between the guitar and the two manuals of the harpsichord. When they are heard separately, the guitar substitutes for the keyboard, and when they are presented together, it sometimes 'mediates' between the two manuals of the harpsichord part. Textual similarities also link a number of Mackay Brown's couplets: for instance, 'Stations' 6/8 and 9/12. However, in contrast to the emphasis on a more homogeneous style, the basset clarinet cadenza recalls Hymnos with its concentrated 'expressionism'.

As compared with Revelation and Fall, the text of From Stone to Thorn presents fewer problems associated with the

opposition between metonymy and metaphor, or the attempt to portray psychological turbulence in terms of 'realistic' narrative. Mackay Brown assumes a general familiarity with the Passion story and the agricultural cycle, enabling him to concentrate on the underlying symbolism which unites them. His predisposition towards ritual means that the poem is written from an emotionally neutral standpoint, and Maxwell Davies adopts the same approach with the instrumental interludes also functioning as 'processionals'.

A sense of ritual informs all Mackay Brown's work, even when he is concentrating on the narrative aspect. It imparts a religious aura to his writing, irrespective of whether or not he is dealing with specifically Christian subjects, and Maxwell Davies has sought to reproduce this atmosphere in his settings, notwithstanding the genre. It characterizes the remaining song-cycles drawn from Fishermen with Ploughs, even though the texts are substantially different in tone as well as content.

(For Fiddlers at the Wedding, see Chapter 6: The Sketches).

Dark Angels, for Mezzo-Soprano and Guitar.

The final song of Fiddlers at the Wedding, Peat Cutting, concludes with an image of 'the black chaos of fire at the earth's centre', and a similar image of desolation occurs at

the end of Dead Fires to close the fifth part of Fishermen with Ploughs. Maxwell Davies chose this poem for the second of the two songs which make up Dark Angels, and a further link between the two cycles is that the overall conception of Dark Angels resembles the setting of Roads, even though the respective poems are very different in construction. The instrumental interlude separating the two songs establishes a recognizable 'ternary' form. It can also be regarded as a 'commentary' on the intervening poem in Mackay Brown's collection which is similar in content to the title poem of Fiddlers at the Wedding.

The Drowning Brothers is a simple monody with accompaniment, yet it achieves a balance between words and music that Maxwell Davies had not attempted in his previous vocal works. This is apparent from the lay-out of the score, which dispenses with conventional time signatures and where the grouping of the bars reflects the composer's preoccupation with realizing the various facets of the poem. The style is consistent throughout and there are no suggestions of parody.

Mackay Brown's poem does not present the sort of problems associated with literary 'modernism'. Nevertheless, although it belongs within the tradition of 'realism', the three distinct levels of its construction, arising from the use of the multiple viewpoint, pose particular problems of interpretation. Maxwell Davies differentiates between the

three perspectives presented in the poem and observes the fact that the opening line of each verse has a degree of autonomy. This is associated with a 'motto' which is separated from the rest of the setting by a double barline. The 'motto' emphasizes the significance of the respective opening lines, while the different levels of the narrative are distinguished by subtle changes of style. Each level of the music is systematically transformed, and although this is dictated by the text, rather than by the elaborate procedures employed in his larger works, the initial 'motto' outlines the basic material of the song. It also establishes a pattern whereby the music adheres as closely as possible to the rhythm of the text. In its original manifestation, the pitches read: (fig. 1). The direct speech which follows is dominated by minor thirds with the guitar accompaniment based on tremolandi. It begins by oscillating between c'' and e'' flat with the voice concentrating on c'' b' a'. The vocal delivery is similar to that of the 'motto', becoming a monotone at 'the burn', onwards. As the amount of direct speech is progressively extended, it exerts an increasingly pervasive influence on the character of Maxwell Davies's setting.

By contrast, the past tense narrative is treated more conventionally; the vocal line is 'atonal', while the guitar accompaniment is primarily chordal and rhythmic. Both text and music are essentially 'prosaic' in style. The atmosphere

is that of a very sophisticated newspaper report, as opposed to the solemn ritual of the first half of the stanza, but in both cases, the words and music maintain a feeling of detachment.

The second version of the 'motto' transposes the pitch material a tone (fig. 2). 'The principal amendments are largely the result of changes in the rhythmic contour. The substitution of 'brother' for 'boy' demands an additional quaver (third pitch); in an exact transposition, the seventh pitch would be b', but it is flattened to a' sharp to retain the tritone interval, descending to e', while the final pitch is altered to create a rising interval of a major third instead of a tone. This emphasizes the word 'gleam', whose note value is the equivalent of the crotchet previously allotted to 'white Stone'.

Other changes involve the addition of a guitar accompaniment. Unlike the previous stanza, the 'motto' and ensuing passage of direct speech share the same pitch material, the guitar's accompanying tremolandi comprising c'/e'' flat and b'/d'' diads, the former coming from bar 3. Although this passage is associated with two lines of poetry, as in the first verse, it occupies a greater proportion of the stanza, which has only six lines, as opposed to the nine lines of its predecessor. The final three lines emphasize the brothers' description. Each presents a separate image as a single

sentence and the greater urgency of the music reflects the speed with which these unfold.

The 'motto' is also extended in the third stanza. If the quaver is regarded as the basic unit, its first two appearances span sixteen quavers, whereas it spans eighteen quavers in Stanza 3 to accommodate an additional pitch. Initially, this variant adheres to the pattern of transposing the original pitch material by a further tone, but then repeats the last six notes of the opening 'motto'. The only difference is that the accompanying diads underline the implied harmonies in the vocal line, thereby contributing to the relative stability of the 'motto' which becomes increasingly significant during the third and fourth stanzas as the compositional styles associated with the different levels of the narrative are ultimately fused.

Six lines of direct speech follow, much of the poetic imagery evoking the sound of the burn. The musical equivalent is achieved by adding upward glissandi to the guitar part, which help to create a sense of movement. The vocal writing is correspondingly more intense. At 'the tinker' the voice is transposed up a minor third while the guitar part is transposed up a major third. This stresses the bleakness of the landscape and also signifies the gathering momentum of the burn before returning to the lower register in preparation for the concluding lines of past tense

narration. In the poem these are treated casually in comparison with the preceding lyricism, and the composer's rendering, delivered with little expression and at considerable speed, captures the mood of the text.

Rhythmically, the final transformation of the 'motto' is virtually identical with its second appearance, but its pitch content is substantially altered (fig. 3). An interesting feature is that the expansion of the 'motto' is accompanied by an increased interval span from a tritone to a minor seventh, and when the 'motto' contracts for its final statement, the interval span is reduced to a major sixth. Another factor unifying the four appearances of the 'motto' is the presence of the tritone which is given particular emphasis at the end of the final version by being transformed from a descending interval followed by an ascending major second or major third, in the manner of a cadence, into a rising interval whose function is definitely cadential.

The setting of the rest of the stanza also differs from the previous examples. The decisive consideration is that the imagery associated with the burn reaches its culmination. The opening lines place its physical properties in a metaphysical context. Accordingly, it is depicted as a source of life, of freedom, but also of potential danger. In response, the vocal writing reaches a peak of



intensity in the highest register. The link between the music for the 'motto' and that for the direct speech - both based on minor thirds - reflects the mood of the poem. The transformations are completed by integrating the style employed for the past tense narration. The guitar tremolandi are replaced by a flowing 'atonal' accompaniment, particularly when the tempo increases at the words 'he fills our pails'. This ensures that the concluding depiction of the brooding atmosphere of the hills achieves the maximum contrast.

Maxwell Davies has frequently favoured a slow, contemplative section, abruptly terminated by a brief 'coda', and this corresponds closely with the structure of The Drowning Brothers. The voice and guitar are focused in their lower registers and the minor third diad in the accompaniment refers to the earlier material, while anticipating the final couplet, which signifies the ultimate transformation of the brothers. The reference to statues completes the sculptural imagery, and Mackay Brown links the artistic enterprise of creating a 'memorial' with the agricultural process. The vocal line accomplishes an equivalent 'completion' of the musical transformations by recapitulating the pitch material associated with the burn. Accordingly, the work returns almost to its starting-point, thereby illustrating the conflicting tendencies in Maxwell Davies's music between cyclic form and a more 'developmental' style.

A similar conflict is evident in the fact that some aspects of the text are set in a strophic manner, while others have given rise to a freely flowing approach. However, overall unity is achieved by various cross-references which show the composer manipulating the music in relation to various phrases of the text in a similar fashion to the patterns derived from the pre-compositional material of his 'abstract' works. The vocal line at 'the crofter' is a modification of that at 'a crofter turned'. The link continues until 'from noon', where the d' sharp/a' tritone corresponds to the d' sharp/a' tritone at 'the sun'. The chord at 'on and out' reproduces that at 'shuttle', but transposed up a semitone. The vocal line at 'the burn all day' is a modified version of the voice part at 'a crofter'/'rudder', transposed up a tone. The pitches of 'set his arm a long white stone' recur at 'pails. He flames in the face of the', transposed up a minor sixth. The guitar part at 'the crofter turned' is repeated in modified form at 'fills our pails'. Moreover, the concluding guitar diad is the same as its first entry.

In Dead Fires, Mackay Brown combines a 'realistic' description of the disintegration of Rackwick with a symbolic evocation of the same process. The community has foundered because it has abandoned the traditional ceremonies, and consequently, the formal element of The Drowning Brothers is replaced by a detached, journalistic style. Each stanza

is a brief statement, comprising one or two brief sentences.

Nevertheless, 'fire' and 'stone' are developed as metaphors, transcending the functional aspects of the poem. In the opening stanza, the absence of fire is simply recorded and then implied in the next two stanzas. By Stanza 4, it has been replaced by the stars as a source of light, signifying the regression of Rackwick to a primitive condition. Stanzas 5 and 6 indicate that the 'squares of ancient turf' (see Peat Cutting) are no longer of use, while 'the one black stone . . . where the hearth fire was rooted' is equally redundant.

Having forged a link between his two metaphors, Mackay Brown develops them contrapuntally. The association of the hearth with an altar introduces a spiritual dimension, together with the notion of sacrifice, while the constructive and destructive aspects of fire are encapsulated in the reference to cooking, and an image of gradual decay: 'A slow fire of rust eats the cold iron'. At the conclusion of the poem, this idea is expanded by comparing the absence of fire as a symbol of the community's demise, with the possibility that it will be used as the agent of total destruction.

The 'stone' metaphor is subjected to similar treatment, its spiritual connotations being contrasted with its use

as a symbol of both life (hearthstone) and death (kirkyard stone). The implication is that civilization depends on establishing a successful interaction between the constructive properties of stone and fire.

A draft of Maxwell Davies's setting is to be found amongst the sketches for Stone Litany. It comprises a substantial portion of the text and the vocal line is clearly related to the Stone Litany material (Chapter 6). The setting evolves in accordance with the structural outline of the poem, rather than attempting to create the musical equivalent of the metaphors. The division of the song into vocal sections with guitar interludes is governed by the changing patterns in Dead Fires. The first vocal episode concentrates on the opening three couplets, its rhythm reflecting the fact that each couplet has a long line followed by a shorter one.

Apart from the final line, emphasized by the melismatic vocal writing, there are few indications of a lyrical impulse, and the music is imbued with a similar atmosphere by reducing the expressive features to a minimum. The rest of the poem consists of three-line stanzas, and these tend to be grouped according to changes within their structure. Stanzas 4/6 have a short sentence (one line) followed by a longer sentence (two lines), and in keeping with the more extended character of the verse, a slower tempo is adopted. However, there is also an element of continuity with the earlier material for

this episode consolidates the contemplative atmosphere established during the preceding guitar solo.

Maxwell Davies also responds to the gradual infusion of lyricism by concentrating the voice in the higher register. The principle introduced in the opening passage whereby each couplet is set at a higher pitch level is thus developed. The style remains 'atonal', with wide intervals predominating. The first indications of 'tonal' references are contained in the lines:

'The one black stone

Is the stone where the hearth fire was rooted.'

The extended vocal section following the second guitar interlude corresponds to a more flexible approach in the organization of the verse. The six remaining stanzas contain several different patterns. Three stanzas comprise a single sentence; two consist of a short sentence followed by a larger one; this pattern is reversed in the remaining stanza. The music for the first two of these stanzas recalls that for the opening couplet of the poem, not least because of tempo, the guitar accompaniment, and especially the fact that the second stanza is sung at a slightly higher pitch level. The music for 'The sheep drift through Reumin all winter' is an almost exact recapitulation of that for 'Stars shine through the roof beams at Scar', and insofar as the

setting of 'The fire beat like a heart in each house' also recalls 'Moss was a tumble of stones', there is some evidence that the song is constructed on a series of interlocking cycles. The 'recapitulation' does not include the 'tonal' reference already mentioned, but this has already been alluded to at the line:

'And out of labour to the lettered kirkyard stone'.

There are further 'tonal' indications during the final guitar interlude, confirming F and G sharp as the main pitch areas, with C and D sharp as subsidiary regions. These have no bearing on the setting of the final stanza, however. The switch of emphasis from narrative to prayer at the conclusion of the poem is matched by the introduction of different music. The change of style reflects the contrast between 'The poor and the good fires are all quenched' and the final couplet:

'Now, cold angel, keep the valley

From the bedlam and cinders of a black pentecost.'

On one level, Maxwell Davies's setting is consistent with the substance of the poem. At a deeper level, it is typical of the composer to suggest, in the final bars, the beginning of a new cycle of 'transformations'. Not only is the vocal writing more rhetorical, but the work also reaches an

ambiguous conclusion on b''.

The song-cycles drawn from Fishermen with Ploughs demonstrate that the basis of Maxwell Davies's preoccupation with Mackay Brown's writings is to be found in his ability to respond to both their formal characteristics and concrete imagery within the framework of his compositional technique. Mackay Brown's influence on Maxwell Davies's output is also connected with the composer's realization that references to traditional forms could be incorporated without compromising his style.

Above all, the poems chosen by Maxwell Davies contain what Jung would describe as 'archetypal' images,<sup>21</sup> which, in Mackay Brown's writings, have been preserved from the impact of both the mass media and literary 'modernism'. The association of the Crucifixion with the agricultural cycle and with various Orcadian legends of death and regeneration is an obvious example. The use of the multiple viewpoint to create different layers of time, thereby evoking the atmosphere of the Fable, is no less important. His choice of titles from this poem-sequence<sup>22</sup> testifies to Maxwell Davies's continuing involvement with Fishermen with Ploughs. The 'symphonic' cantata, Black Pentecost is particularly important in this respect. In its final form, setting passages from the novel, Greenvoe, the work expresses the close identification with the Orkney community which Fishermen with Ploughs had helped to initiate.

Henceforth, Orcadian themes played a crucial role in determining not only Maxwell Davies's subsequent output, but also his concern with other aspects of music-making in the Islands. As the next chapter will demonstrate, these themes invariably exemplified archetypal features.

Notes.

- 1 N. Frye (Editor), 1957, Page xv.
- 2 A. Bold, 1978, Page 35; G. M. Brown, 1969, Page 36.
- 3 A. Bold, Op. Cit., Page 34; Chapman, Volume 4 No. 4, 1976, Page 23.
- 4 T. Tanner, 1971, Chapter 3, Pages 64/85.
- 5 P. M. Davies, 1976, Pages 20/22.
- 6 P. Griffiths, 1982, 2, Page 118.
- 7 B. Docherty, 1988, Pages 2/11. Her comparison between Britten's restraint when setting texts, including precise musical equivalents for the verbal and structural characteristics of highly organized poetry, with Tippett's entirely 'free' approach to texts, casts an interesting light on Maxwell Davies's attitude to Mackay Brown's writings, which can be deduced from the sketches for Fiddlers at the Wedding and Black Pentecost (see Chapter 6).
- 8 D. Dunn, 1974, Pages 80/92.
- 9 S. Banfield, 1985, Volume 2, Pages 382/396. See especially Page 384, where the author suggests that 'the



native embarrassment at expressing one's emotions' meant that the English were particularly susceptible to the use of 'post-Wagnerian techniques for doing so in a sublimated way, harmonically codified . . . in the accompaniment, may have been one reason for the upsurge of English song in the early 20th-century'. This contention casts an interesting light on Revelation and Fall, where Maxwell Davies employs 'expressionist' theatrical gestures to transfer the emotional burden of the poetry to the voice, while retaining the musical 'argument' in the 'accompaniment'. By adopting the poet's objective detachment in his Mackay Brown settings, the composer has established an equipoise between voice and ensemble in this respect.

10 B.B.C. World Service: Meridian, dated 7th June 1987.

11 D. Dunn, Op. Cit., page 90.

12 Op. Cit., Page 91.

13 Op. Cit., Page 92.

14 N. Frye (Editor), 1957, Page 65.

15 Op. Cit., Pages 16/64.

16 D. Osmond-Smith (Editor), 1985, Page 113.

17 J. J. Nattiez (Editor), 1985, Page 180.

18 P. M. Davies, 1976, Page 21.

19 D. Osmond-Smith (Editor), Op. Cit., Page 115.

20 S. Pruslin (Editor), 1979, Page 2.

21 C. G. Jung, 1935, Page 41.

22 For example, The Kestrel Paced Round the Sun, for

solo flute; The Door of the Sun, for solo viola;  
The Seven Brightnesses, for solo clarinet; Hill  
Runes, for guitar; Sea Runes, for vocal ensemble.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Section 1 - Religious and Folk Themes.

The reference to archetypes at the conclusion of Chapter 4 was intended to establish a link with the present chapter in that Mackay Brown's concentration on religious and folk themes, especially the voyage theme, can be interpreted as archetypal, drawing on and increasingly helping to preserve what Jung would regard as aspects of the Orkney community's 'collective unconscious'. The significance for Maxwell Davies of Mackay Brown's example has not been restricted to the formal possibilities inherent in setting texts exemplifying the author's principal themes, but as will be illustrated in Chapter 6, has involved a quest for equivalent musical archetypes, including the creation of pre-compositional models that would be capable of generating both cyclic forms, in accordance with the Medieval/Renaissance tradition, as well as developmental, or 'transformation processes' analogous to the procedures of the Austro-German 'symphonic' tradition. This has been the least tangible aspect of Mackay Brown's influence, though by encouraging the composer to extend his technical facility, it has contributed to the greater range of Maxwell Davies's output during the 'Orkney' period. Other factors have also been involved, including reactions to recent cultural, political and social trends (see Chapters 7/8). It is arguable that these have a

more direct association with Mackay Brown, in that they stem from Maxwell Davies's identification with the Orkney community, achieved by expanding the settings from Fishermen with Ploughs into more ambitious projects. Greater emphasis has also been attached to communicating with a wider audience - a feature which led to the founding of the St. Magnus Festival, as well as a commitment to various educational activities which have subsequently spread beyond the islands.

As we have seen, Mackay Brown's writings are invariably permeated by a religious dimension, expressed through his belief that Medieval Orkney society, strongly influenced by the Catholicism of the period, represented a satisfactory balance between Church and community. He has also maintained close links with the oral tradition of Fable and story telling, thereby enabling him to infuse a 'timeless' quality into his writings. He has always drawn on a variety of styles, including the use of 'modernist' techniques, but has generally avoided the main literary conventions, whether those of the realistic novel, or the more experimental forms of writing. The principal stimulus for Mackay Brown's creative imagination has come from the assumption that a close bond existed between the Christian and folk traditions, since both were concerned with the symbolism of everyday rituals, and with the ceremonies marking the seasons, as well as successive stages of life. Magnus Erlendson and Storm Kolson are the most prominent figures in his writing,

fulfilling similar roles in respect of these traditions. Both are historical characters, fairly well documented in the case of St Magnus, but it is the legendary aspects of their careers which have preoccupied Mackay Brown: Magnus's pacificism, his piety and the miracles which were supposed to have been inspired by his martyrdom; Storm Kolson's artistic prowess as 'the Blind Fiddler'. Maxwell Davies's identification with these two characters has been equally enthusiastic, culminating in the two largescale works he wrote in 1975 dealing with their respective exploits. However, he had already completed two substantial scores indirectly influenced by Mackay Brown's writings, namely, Hymn to St Magnus and Stone Litany, and associated with particular sources which have survived from the era when Orkney was dominated by the Vikings, especially the Orkneyinga Saga.

The pervasive Catholicism of Mackay Brown's work is matched by Maxwell Davies's use of plainsong as the basis of the great majority of his compositions, and the fragment of plainchant chosen to fulfil this function is often determined by the symbolism of the text. The theme of death and resurrection can be linked to both Magnus' martyrdom and the legendary disappearance of The Blind Fiddler (The Two Fiddlers), as well as to the agricultural cycle, and although the works directly concerned with St Magnus appear to be exceptions in this respect, the composer has concentrated on

the appropriate plainsong material - Dies Irae and Victimae Paschali Laudes - in many of his Mackay Brown related scores. Moreover, he has followed Mackay Brown's practice of associating Maeshowe with Storm Kolsson in An Orkney Tapestry, and St Magnus in Stone Poems (A Calendar of Love) by linking the symbolism of Hymn to St Magnus and Stone Litany (see Chapter 6) to specific compositional preoccupations.

In a lecture delivered in 1984,<sup>1</sup> Maxwell Davies stated that after completing Taverner, he was dissatisfied with his knowledge of the Austro-German tradition as compared with what he had learned from the Medieval/Renaissance tradition. He had failed to combine transformation techniques associated with Medieval and Renaissance music with large Austro-German forms. He began by abandoning the German prototypes on which he had relied in the 1960s in favour of smaller forms to which he could not give a name. These could only be described in terms of allowing much greater freedom in the manipulation of material than had proved possible with larger structures. The result is generally kaleidoscopic, but in Tenebrae Super Gesualdo, an extended form is achieved by using constant transformations, each leading to a cadential point which also functions as the start of a further transformation sequence. A continuous thread is thus established, and though it is not always audible, in that it is mainly confined to the background, it rises to the surface as fragments of the

Gesualdo Responses, on which the work is based, presented as a series of interludes, complete with tonal implications. Tenebrae Super Gesualdo demonstrated that Maxwell Davies could incorporate pre-existing material into his music without employing elements of parody or distortion. The result was a style even simpler than his early works, devoid of violent incongruities or contrasts. It encouraged him to extend his new principles of integration to include not only 'symphonic' form, but also various types of descriptive music.

Hymn to St Magnus; The Martyrdom of St Magnus.

In Hymn to St Magnus, as the composer has stated, the hymn tune is subjected to 'enormous interlocking isorhythmic structures of great complexity'<sup>2</sup>, but bearing in mind Peter Owens's remarks about the tenuous links between the score of Worldes Blis and the 13th-century monody upon which it is allegedly based, particularly in view of his claim that they are equally applicable to Hymn to St Magnus,<sup>3</sup> it is apparent that the 12th-century original, Nobilis Humilis, may be less important in terms of the work's overall scheme than might have been supposed. David Roberts's comments in Chapter 8 of his thesis, support this statement in that it is assumed that the prominence of the Worldes Blis material indicates its status as the ultimate source of the work. Moreover, his outline in the previous chapter of one of the

structural principles of Hymn to St Magnus establishes a link with Maxwell Davies's String Quartet (1961), illustrating the continuity of his technical development. He also shows that by creating a 'transposition square', the identity of the original 'set' is quickly obscured. However, by subjecting the 'square' to 'plain hunt permutation' derived from the bell-ringing formula, and combining the results with the unpermuted version to form a 'diadic square', the hymn is recalled insofar as it is set out in parallel thirds. Roberts observes that some of the material of the latter 'square' is shared with Tenebrae Super Gesualdo, and there are general similarities of mood and instrumental timbre. These features, especially the 'plain hunt' principle, can be associated with the use of late Medieval compositional techniques, but the most interesting aspect of Hymn to St Magnus is that whereas the first two movements tend to be dominated by the Medieval/Renaissance tradition, the composer's description of the third as a 'sonata allegro' implies the influence of Austro-German models.

The first movement opens with an outline of the pitches which the composer has used as the 'agent' of his 'transformation processes'. They are presented in eight groups of five notes, shared between pizzicato viola/cello and glockenspiel. Eleven notes of the chromatic scale are employed, the exception being A flat. The pitches are sufficiently evenly distributed to avoid any obvious 'tonal'



implications. No interval assumes special prominence, the most important factor being the large leaps as notes are passed between viola/cello and glockenspiel. Apart from an inverted chord of D minor, made up of a, d, f heard separately, triads are excluded, emphasizing the absence of a clear tonal focus. After this brief introduction, a 'realization' of the opening phrases of the hymn-tune is heard in the flute accompanied by glockenspiel doubling at a distance of two octaves and stressing the principal pitches. These prove to be the last five notes of at least one of the composer's 'sets'. A significant feature of the hymn is that it is generally divided into three-note phrases, and because the first phrase is repeated twice, starting on D flat as opposed to A in the original, D flat momentarily acquires the status of main tonal centre. However, its dominance vanishes when the 'transformation processes' begin. Peter Owens's comments are confirmed by the fact that these are more closely related to the composer's division of his basic material into five-note blocks than to the hymn. The wide intervals are not only typical of this arrangement of pitches, but also of Maxwell Davies's style in general. Nevertheless, the clarinet and flute refer to the hymn's pitch-level, or 'tonal' centre, heralding its re-appearance in slightly varied form on viola and cello. Thereafter, handbells are introduced, enhancing the work's liturgical associations (the hymn is believed to have been written for the consecration of St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall<sup>4</sup>). As

the composer has mentioned, these sounds are soon extended<sup>5</sup>  
'into the domain of instrumental sound', and the movement  
concludes with a dedication of the work to the Saint.

Prominent instrumental solos in the two central movements  
of Hymn to St Magnus reflect the influence of monody on  
Maxwell Davies's thinking. In combination, these two  
movements have a similar structure to Worldes Blis, the  
second movement functioning as an extended upbeat to the  
third. The fact that the two works share the same source  
material and compositional procedures is thus underlined, yet  
the titles of these movements: 'Sonata Prima' and 'Sonata  
Seconda Super 'Sancte Magne'', look back to the early phase  
of the composer's career and to his interest in Renaissance  
instrumental sonatas. In this connection, Paul Griffiths has  
pointed out that the opening phrase of the hymn, consisting  
of an ascending minor third followed by a descending minor  
second, which forms the developmental basis of both  
movements, was also responsible for O Magnum Mysterium,<sup>6</sup>  
amongst other works.

In the second movement, the sequence of isorhythmic cycles  
conforms to the outline established in Tenebrae Super  
Gesualdo except that the continuity of the discourse is no  
longer disturbed by interludes. The first half of the  
movement consists of contrasting duos: flute/clarinet on the  
one hand; strings on the other. They are unified by a

'cantus firmus' played on the harpsichord. Prominence is given to the three-note motif already mentioned, though not necessarily employing the same pitch material. The second half of the movement is different in character, comprising a series of solos for other melody instruments.

Whereas the second movement generally unfolds at a deliberate tempo and employs comparatively regular phrase lengths, the third opens with music of such rapidity that the listener is confronted by a different awareness of time. The inclusion of extended glissandi among the instrumental gestures increases the sense of disjunction arising from the music's unpredictable character. Bell-like sonorities emanating from crotales, glockenspiel and celeste are clearly important in that they function as a 'cantus firmus' - a role taken up by the piano and marimba during their subsequent duet. As such, a link is established with the harpsichord part during the first half of the second movement and even the handbells in the opening movement. The rest of the movement involves a greater concentration on the 'symphonic' and descriptive aspects of the music. The mood engendered by accounts of Magnus' martyrdom, especially those by Mackay Brown, is linked to a graphic description of the stark outline of Hoy, allied to a stormy 'seascape'. The agitated piano and marimba writing, whose function is analogous to a 'development section', is replaced by elaborate contrapuntal material for the rest of the ensemble and this

'recapitulates' in varied form the opening of the movement. There is also an extended coda comprising the soprano's invocation to the Saint: 'Sancte magne, Ora Pro Nobis', and, as at the conclusion of Worldes Blis, the movement reaches its apotheosis as a sequence of bell chimes. The several repetitions of the prayer indicate the extent of Maxwell Davies's identification with the historical and mythological aspects of St Magnus's career. They also suggest the religious fervour which motivated Magnus's actions.

The bell sounds resolve the intensity of the preceding music and provide a smooth transition to the final movement where tranquillity is restored. An interesting facet of the third movement is that its four main cycles correspond to the divisions normally associated with sonata-form. It also contains the clearest examples of a 'diadic square' which Roberts has been able to locate - respectively on celeste, followed by a more elaborate version on flute. The movement can also be regarded as the climax of the score and, in consequence, the final movement functions as an 'epilogue', or 'coda' to the work. It follows without a break and is introduced by hand bells, referring to the basic thematic material, including the hymn. Other variants are articulated by the rest of the ensemble, and there is a distillation of the work's harmonic scheme. The final vocal contribution comprises an eulogy to the Saint, which can be regarded as the second climax of the score. The original hymn is only

indirectly quoted but as the text summarizes Magnus's career, the threads of the music are drawn together to suggest that it is governed by an overall transformation scheme, whose cyclic character influences both the construction of each movement and ensures that the music returns to its origins.

This is essentially the system Maxwell Davies has evolved in conjunction with the use of 'magic squares', so that while the basic 'set' of this work does not conform to a 'square' in that the forty pitches outlined in the introduction are not divisible into rows and columns of equal size, there is sufficient resemblance for the work to be recognized as a significant 'landmark' in the composer's progress towards the formula he has used extensively during the past decade.

There is no direct musical link between Hymn to St Magnus and The Martyrdom of St Magnus, but the chamber opera dramatizes the events of the Saint's career as outlined in the final vocal section of the earlier work. 'The Martyrdom' also makes use of the 'magic square' principle, which had received its clearest formulation in the immediately preceding Ave Maris Stella.<sup>7</sup> Ave Maris Stella was the first major work for the Fires of London ensemble after Hymn to St Magnus, and was also the first non-vocal score for the group. In certain respects, The Martyrdom of St Magnus is the vocal counterpart of Ave Maris Stella. The 'magic square' is identical (The 'Magic square of the Moon', involving nine rows and

columns), except that in the opera, it is set out in retrograde, so that the final pitch (bottom right-hand) is transferred to the top left-hand corner. The Marian connotations of Ave Maris Stella are embodied in the character of 'Blind Mary', whose religious significance is combined with her function as narrator, and symbol of the Orcadian folk tradition. Like 'The Blind Fiddler', she is depicted constantly travelling around the island. She provides the 'framework' within which the opera is set, outlining the basic imagery and symbolism of the work at the start, in conjunction with an unaccompanied statement of the 'magic square'<sup>8</sup> (which includes fig.1), and concluding with a blessing bestowed on the audience/congregation. As such, elements of liturgical music are incorporated into the work, and the influence of the preceding song-cycles is apparent. Besides the author's encouragement of greater clarity as regards word-setting, the emotional detachment of the writing is reflected in the opera's construction. In keeping with the 'magic square', there are nine scenes.

In extracting his libretto from Mackay Brown's second novel, Maxwell Davies was obviously aware of the similarities with Taverner, including a recurrence of the themes of treachery and betrayal, as well as the fact that in both operas, the chief protagonist is portrayed as an 'outsider'. This is apparent from the fact that, as David Roberts pointed out in his review of the first performance of The

Martyrdom, the two works share the 'death' chord, together with several plainsong themes: 'Gloria Tibi Trinitas', 'Victimae Paschali Laudes', 'Veni Creator Spiritus'. He also referred to the device of illustrating the passage of time through quotations from different periods of music history (Mackay Brown's novel employs the literary equivalent of this device), but only alluded indirectly to the specific purpose of drawing a parallel between political killings in the Middle Ages and similar contemporary events. Finally, he observed that 'the greater directness and simplicity' of the later work was due to 'a move away from complex counterpoint and canons towards more homogeneous and transparent textures'.<sup>10</sup> The formal properties of the 'magic square' may have helped to prevent the music becoming fractured.

However, the principal difference from Taverner is that throughout The Martyrdom of St Magnus, comparatively little emphasis is placed on the psychological turbulence of the main character. This has been determined by the fact that Mackay Brown's novel is written as much from the crofters' and tinkers' standpoint. By preserving the objectivity of the text, Maxwell Davies has avoided the problem discussed by Gabriel Josipovici in relation to the<sup>11</sup> libretto of Taverner of 'rendering the cry articulate'. The mechanism of the novel gave Maxwell Davies a scheme which, though formal, was sufficiently flexible to enable him

to retain elements of 'realism'. The balance established between Magnus and 'Blind Mary' is extended to incorporate aspects of the everyday world with which the spectator can identify. These include historical and allegorical features which also operate as 'distancing conventions'.<sup>12</sup> The technique is derived from the opening chapters, where the author creates the background into which the 'tapestry' of Magnus' life is woven. It is characterized by an all-pervading formality involving both the everyday rituals of the crofters and the ceremonies of the gentry. Only the tinkers do not conform to this hierarchical structure, and it is the subversive element in their way of life which has appealed to both Mackay Brown and Maxwell Davies.

Nevertheless, Maxwell Davies chose the formal characteristics of the 12th-century naval battle as the means of subjecting the 'square', outlined in the narrator's introductory verses, to its first largescale elaboration, while also illustrating Magnus's pacificism. This also enabled him to introduce the full ensemble - flute, clarinet, horn, two trumpets, violin doubling viola, cello, keyboards, percussion - employed in a variety of smaller combinations in the later scenes. In Scenes 2 and 7, particularly (both cast in variation form), changes of instrumentation or style are crucial in underlining the drama.

Comparisons with Taverner illustrate the extent of



Mackay Brown's influence on The Martyrdom of St Magnus. The association between Scene 2 of The Martyrdom and Act I, Scene 4 of Taverner is unusually strong. Both are psychological 'studies' of the respective protagonists as they attempt to reconcile their religious attitudes to their responsibilities as statesman and musician. Accordingly, the differences of approach between the two operas are exemplified in these scenes. The preservation of Mackay Brown's detached style in the later opera is in stark contrast to the portrayal of John Taverner's equivalent crisis. The 'modernist' outlook has been replaced by a ritualistic interpretation of spiritual struggle, demonstrating a large measure of agreement with Mackay Brown's Catholic beliefs, while also attempting to capture the atmosphere and ethos of Medieval religious drama. The distortion, parody and fragmentation of Taverner, Act I, Scene 4, together with its demonic symbolism reflecting the fact that John Taverner makes the wrong choice, are superseded by music whose underlying simplicity is entirely consonant with the general acceptance of Catholic dogma at the time of Magnus's martyrdom. In contrast to Taverner's inability to distinguish between 'truth' and 'falsity', or Christ and his 'dark double', and the fact that he became the focus of Maxwell Davies's religious preoccupations, Magnus is portrayed as unfaltering in his resolve, capable of accepting his destiny and of resisting subtle temptations. His passive role, stemming from Mackay Brown's assumption that the

martyrdom was pre-ordained, is represented by music which changes almost imperceptibly. On the other hand, his 'tempters' are depicted as dynamic characters and are usually presented as conventional models of the most reputable figures in society.

Nevertheless, in both Scenes 2 and 7, elements of parody are introduced to illustrate the deteriorating situation over which Magnus presides. In the former, based on the fourth chapter of the novel, four of the five 'temptations' outline the events that precede the civil war and which are more fully covered in Scenes 3 and 4 of the opera, based, respectively, on the subsequent two chapters of the book. In the latter - the third of four scenes all derived from Chapter 7 of Magnus - the mounting confusion surrounding the collapse of the 'Peace Parley' and the outbreak of hostilities is characterized by elements of banality in accordance with the composer's wartime recollections of the association of momentous events with trivial music, as well as the notion of creating a pastiche of a typical television news bulletin. Familiar dance forms are employed and most of the extracts are conventionally 'tonal', using standard harmonic procedures. The succession of musical clichés reflect the meaningless phrases of popular journalism and the technique of fragmentation is analogous to that of Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé' in that each is concerned with the splintering of language. In The Martyrdom, Maxwell Davies

concentrates on some of the principal features of Western music which have already been distorted by the creators of 'musack' as music and language are reduced to insignificant gestures.

Yet although the element of parody is entirely characteristic of Maxwell Davies, it is based on a sequence of pastiche television 'reports' in the novel which Alan Bold regards as an example of Mackay Brown's use of 'Verfremdungseffekte'.<sup>13</sup>

Thus the opera enhances the Brechtian features which have been incorporated into, or are at least implicit, in the original text. The performing instructions stress that there should be the minimum of 'props', adding that the work was conceived in terms of comparatively intimate surroundings: 'It is ideally to be played in the round in a small hall to an audience of not more than 250, seated on the floor in a circle.' All theatrical illusion has been excluded.

Consequently, the spectators are given an impartial role in which they are encouraged to assess the relative merits of the contending political factions, and to appreciate the allegorical significance of the dispute as a conflict between good and evil. The important factor is that from the standpoint of the crofters, both sides are equally culpable, so that when 'Blind Mary' addresses the audience directly in Scene 3, she condemns them as mercenaries, irrespective of their allegiance. Similarly, the fifth and sixth scenes counterbalance each other in terms of text and musical

'realization' in that they present the opposing viewpoints of Magnus and Hakon respectively.

Maxwell Davies's adherence to the different perspectives of Mackay Brown's narrative technique enabled him not only to present the resolution of the conflict as a sacrificial ritual, but also to underline the symbolic aspect of both the novel and his operatic interpretation. By casting the story in the 'timeless' realm of Fable, both writer and composer could move freely between the 12th and 20th centuries. They could also emphasize the allegorical aspect of the narrative, with the restoration of 'Blind Mary's' sight signifying both her spiritual transformation, as well as the return of peace to the Islands. The concentration on 'Blind Mary' in the final scene also reflected the fact that Magnus's transformation from a historical to a legendary figure was of particular importance to the crofters and tinkers of Orkney. It was in keeping with the fact that harvesting figures prominently at the conclusion of the novel, thereby confirming that another of its underlying themes is concerned with death and resurrection, or regeneration.

The extent of Mackay Brown's influence on Maxwell Davies's output can be gauged from the fact that whereas Taverner reaches a pessimistic conclusion, The Martyrdom of St Magnus ends affirmatively, with the Saint being invoked and 'Blind Mary' dismissing the audience with a version of his blessing.

It shows the composer treating religious themes more directly and with less scepticism, and the problem of singing what could easily be spoken is solved by the creation of a flexible style which allows for speech in the 'naturalistic' episodes. An equally important factor concerns Magnus's constant involvement with religious observance, since the monastic background meant that plainsong could influence the drama, as well as the music. Ultimately, ritual takes precedence over 'realism', and this is equally true of Magnus's counterpart in Orcadian folklore: Storm Kolson, The Blind Fiddler.

#### The Blind Fiddler.

As the counterpart of St Magnus in Orcadian folklore, Storm Kolson appears in various manifestations throughout Mackay Brown's writings and as such, has been the subject of at least two important scores by Maxwell Davies. It is likely that the composer's first encounter with Storm Kolson was in the chapter on Lore in An Orkney Tapestry, which opens with the legend of the Two Fiddlers, in which Mackay Brown expanded the title story of his collection for young people, subsequently adapted by Maxwell Davies as a children's opera. The tale concerns Kolson's disappearance for many years, having been captured, on midsummer's day, by the 'earth people', 'the potent energies of the earth that quicken grass

and corn' (Page 119). The fiddle music was used to inspire a rich corn harvest. Mackay Brown observed that this story was not simply about 'the timeless quality of art', but also the association in the peasant's mind of art 'with death and fruition'. The fiddle, skull and corn stalk are thus inter-related symbols (Page 119). Fiddles were particularly important during the midsummer celebrations, accompanying the dancing as fires were lit on all the hill tops of Orkney to ensure fertility for the whole community during the coming year. Art formed an integral part of these primitive rituals until, as Mackay Brown noted, its magical qualities deeply disturbed 'puritans, hedonists, humanists, democrats, pragmatists, rationalists, progressives, and nowadays nearly everyone fits into one or other of these categories'. Art was increasingly separated from everyday experience and was appreciated by a diminishing number of people, though music, dancing and poetry resisted the trend which Mackay Brown saw as having been established by the Calvinists. The Medieval Church had encouraged all three activities to the extent that they remained part of the fabric of life long after the Reformation, and the symbolism associated with the fiddler and his music retained much of its potency. Although, in accordance with the fabulous aspect of A Spell for Greencorn, Storm Kolson appears in several guises over many centuries, the character on whom he is based actually flourished during the 17th century. As a musician, with a vital function in the community, he has become the 'spokesman' for Mackay

Brown's artistic beliefs: 'Art must be of use' (Page 121). Fiddle music should be present not only for the main events in a crofter's life - births, weddings, funerals - but also for lesser rituals such as the launching of a new boat or the ploughing of a new field. All aspects were reflected in the fiddler's reel: 'The rhythms of art were closely related to the seasonal rhythms' (Page 122). Maxwell Davies's endorsement of these views encouraged a simplification of his style, not least in the works he has written for the local community.

The extracts from notebooks, supposedly written by Kolson but really the work of Mackay Brown, included as an appendix to A Spell for Greencorn, formed the text of The Blind Fiddler, Maxwell Davies's most ambitious song-cycle, scored for the same ensemble as The Martyrdom of St Magnus, but with the omission of the horn and two trumpets. More than any of his other settings of Mackay Brown texts, Maxwell Davies adheres strictly to the author's number symbolism. Paul Griffiths points out that the work is based on a 7 x 7 'magic square', and this reflects the choice of seven extracts, governed by the fact that following the six scenes of A Spell for Greencorn, the appendix constitutes the seventh part of the original publication. Additionally, the opening extract is divided into seven shorter sections and is primarily concerned with the fiddler's role in counteracting the effects of 'seven black masks' (the seven capital, or

'deadly' sins). In the fifth song, there is a reference to 'seven crofts with a creel below and a plough above', and to the fact that seven boats set sail in the morning, but only six returned. In Song 6, 'seven wrong words' are mentioned. Finally, there is the 'seven-syllabled word', six of whose syllables 'created the world and all that was in it while the seventh syllable is silence'.

Besides emphasizing the importance of the 'cycle of fifths' throughout the work, Bruce Cole has referred to the 'aura of beats, overtones and difference tones'.<sup>14</sup> He also mentions that while the writing for the violin revolves around its open strings, that for the guitar is based on E and B, equally 'natural' keys for the instrument. The significance of this remark stems from the fact that in addition to the violin, the guitar has a major role throughout the cycle, especially in the seven songs. This is in accordance with the following lines from the final song:

'Therefore he no more troubled the pool of silence,  
But put on mask and cloak,  
Strung a guitar  
And went among the folk.'

The element of folk music is also present in the dance interludes, through the inclusion of spoons and bones among the percussion, but it should be added that for some time in



the 1970s, during which The Blind Fiddler was composed, Timothy Walker was working with the Fires of London as their regular guitarist. Whichever consideration was paramount, the two instruments represent a crucial aspect of what Paul Griffiths describes as 'an internal drama, the central character personified in the solo violin part and the singer now cast in the role of narrator'.<sup>15</sup> The influence of A Spell for Greencorn is equally pervasive, for all the extracts have links with the play, so that it functions as the 'ghost' of the song-cycle. Thus, the allusion to Kolson's betrayal of Sigrid in the name of music enables the composer to recall Taverner by means of a prominent cello melody, resembling the music at John Taverner's words: 'My Lord Abbot, prepare yourself for the fire'.

Although Maxwell Davies's setting illustrates many of the nuances of Mackay Brown's text, the decisive factor is the similarity between the overall meaning of the play and Notebook and the symbolism which relates The Blind Fiddler to many works written both before and during the 'Orkney' period. Its fourteen sections are arranged so that the texts of the odd-numbered songs are mainly concerned with the 'timeless' rituals of traditional Orkney life, while the even-numbered items celebrate its various facets through religious, or artistic symbols. The manner in which the contrasting types of music are gradually fused forms an obvious parallel with Vesalii Icones and as in so many of

Maxwell Davies's scores, there is a concluding Resurrection sequence. Together with the sixth song, this can only be fully understood in relation to the final scene of A Spell for Greencorn, though unlike Mackay Brown, Maxwell Davies incorporates a characteristic element of ambiguity. The sixth song is concerned with the resilience of the Orkney tradition, and alludes to the moment in the play when 'the spell that keeps pure the old rhyme of man - death bread breath', or, 'the tale of everyman in three circling words - breath bread death' (Page 61), is broken. The significance of the scene is that like St Magnus, The Blind Fiddler is able to restore the 'spell', but before this can be achieved, the main events have to be 'recapitulated' in order to exorcise the unsatisfactory features of Orkney history. The sixth song fulfils an analogous function with regard to the song-cycle. Bruce Cole suggests that the music is allowed 'to wobble on the brink of collapse',<sup>16</sup> and the fact that the cello replaces the violin as the principal instrument in the subsequent interlude supports Paul Griffiths's contention that the song is primarily concerned with the death of the fiddler.<sup>17</sup> This event is symbolized by the breaking of the last fiddle string, and besides reflecting the kaleidoscopic quality of the writing, the non-developmental character of the music enhances the impact of the unity that is ultimately achieved. Paul Griffiths regards the work's concluding tritone as the 'final resurrection of the violin - an exquisite but piercing negation',<sup>18</sup> but Bruce Cole

interprets the closing bars as heralding the re-generation of the creative process: 'Maxwell Davies touchingly evokes the image of Kolson trying to scrape out a tune in first  
19  
position'.

Accordingly, although the text of The Blind Fiddler is dominated by poetic, rather than religious imagery, the underlying meaning of the work is the same as in The Martyrdom of St Magnus. Though Storm Kolson's role is less 'sacrificial' than that of St Magnus, in that it is expressed through 'dance and ceremony', rather than martyrdom, he is nevertheless capable of assuming the mantle of a Christ-figure. The text is thus a metaphor for the creative process in general (transforming a stone by scratching 'on it a fish and a corn stalk', or turning it into 'fish and loaf'), which Maxwell Davies has continued to explore in his subsequent works, irrespective of whether or not they have involved setting words by Mackay Brown. Not the least important implication of this has been his growing preoccupation with the educational and social functions of music. The allegorical nature of Mackay Brown's writings has proved the main source of inspiration, for it shows that as long as the process of transforming earth into 'bread and ale', or of syllables and notes into poetry and music cannot be adequately explained, religion and art will retain their mysterious power.

The Blind Fiddler is Maxwell Davies's most ambitious song-cycle, probably longer than all three cycles from Fishermen with Ploughs added together, and apart from Winterfold, a setting of a single poem from Mackay Brown's collection of the same title, the composer has since concentrated on adapting the author's texts to other genres. Its scale can also be appreciated by comparing the range of the vocal and instrumental writing to his other vocal works, besides the earlier Mackay Brown settings. By dispensing with 'expressionist' gestures in favour of ethereal resonances emanating from string harmonics, virtually all traces of the influence of Pierrot Lunaire have been removed. The violin's concluding phrase summarizes the instrumental technique adopted throughout the work. The emotionally detached vocal style of the earlier song-cycles has also been expanded without reverting to 'expressionism'. Considerable demands are made of the singer, varying from the elaborate melismatic writing of the third song to intoning at the end of the work. It may be added that the composer's selection and re-ordering of extracts from the Notebook has altered its character so as to avoid the more obvious associations with the dramatic aspects of A Spell for Greencorn. In contrast to the play, Maxwell Davies does not confront the theme of Resurrection directly, and he avoids the theatricality of the breaking of the last fiddle string. These are reflections of the composer's decision that 'spiritual matters' should no longer be the subject of

'extravagant gestures', but should be explored 'inside the  
20  
music'.

The expression of another aspect of the Notebook could not be confined to a single work, but involved a reassessment of the composer's relationship to the community: 'We worked a miracle once, you and I. A dead summer long ago we purified source and root. Suddenly the burnt out hill was wet and green - the corn was alive! The crippled harvesters danced in the field . . . yet we stayed too long under that hill. We moved too much in the secret places. We tore the dance from the plough and the nets. We betrayed the Saint. We looked coldly at the witch in the flame. We spun a blind rootless beauty in the concert hall, in the gallery, in the anthologies, across a million turning discs . . . . We cultivated a heraldic craving - 'our song must last for ever'. We changed the living bread back into stone . . . . But in the end the song became my private song, mine by law and copyright and thumb print. The hungry sheep looked up and were not fed. They took their hungers to the shepherd of oil and rust, the machine.' (A Spell for Greencorn, Page 85). Storm Kolson's fictitious Notebook enabled Mackay Brown to outline his creative philosophy, and the impact of his reflections on Maxwell Davies assisted the composer in defining the new role he was establishing in Orkney. In response to the injunction, 'art must be of use', the St Magnus Festival was founded as the principal means of

promoting music-making in the Orkney community and ensuring that his compositions were no longer confined to comparative isolation.

## Section 2 - The 'Voyage' as Theme and Metaphor.

### 'Voyage' symbolism in Mackay Brown's Oeuvre.

'Every poet has his private mythology, his own spectroscopic hand, or peculiar formation of symbols, of much of which he is quite unconscious'.<sup>21</sup>

The unique feature of Mackay Brown's output, distinguishing him from the majority of his contemporaries, is the extent to which he has retained a direct connection with the central myths and archetypes of literature as outlined by Northrop Frye.<sup>22</sup> The objective detachment exemplified in his writings is closely allied to his preoccupation with the ritual aspects of Orkney life, especially as they are expressed through Christian symbolism. Mackay Brown rarely evinces a specifically personal viewpoint, except insofar as it relates to the collective experience. In his journalism, opinions are associated either with local events, or with wider issues which impinge on the community. They are invariably tinged with memories of his boyhood in Stromness, and with his knowledge of Orkney history, which is generally used as a spur to the creative imagination, rather than a body of

'facts'.

Certain superficial features of his personality can be identified in some of his characters. The first person narrator of The Eye of the Hurricane (A Time to Keep) probably comes closest to a 'self-portrait'. By contrast, the doctor who fulfils a similar function in A Winter Tale (The Sun's Net) can be regarded as an attempt by the author to assume the personality of a non-Orkadian who, like Maxwell Davies, settled in the Islands during adult life.

The tendency to use characters as 'devices', enabling Mackay Brown to explore different facets of his personality, as well as ideas and attitudes with which he does not necessarily sympathize, is matched by his concentration on a small repertoire of basic themes. In conjunction, they ensure that the writer's objectivity is preserved, as does the emphasis he places on their 'timeless' quality. They are expressions of a storytelling tradition which has its roots in an oral culture, hence their links with the local folklore and the form of Christianity introduced to the Orkneys by the Vikings. The strong sense of perspective which characterizes Mackay Brown's writing, reflecting his rejection of 'modernism', is based on the re-working of key motifs.

The 'voyage', or 'journey', is the most persistent of his themes. It is generally associated with the quest myth, but

embraces a wide range of symbolism. Journeys abound in Mackay Brown's fictions. Their significance is often literal, but is rarely restricted to physical considerations. Their metaphorical status is frequently enhanced by historical or metaphysical associations, yet their structural function is equally important. In The Eye of the Hurricane, the narrator's interest in Earl Rognvald's crusade to Jerusalem forms a counterpoint to the description of the old sea captain's last days in terms of his 'final voyage'. The Whaler's Return is a comic re-working of the Odyssey, or Pilgrim's Progress, as Flaws yields to many temptations during his journey, but ultimately reaches his objective. Other stories and plays employ the 'voyage' motif as a 'device' for comparing different periods of Orkney history, the idea of 'time-travelling' being used to illustrate that significant features of the Islands' culture (including the crofter-fisherman, the fiddler, or the tinker) have retained their function over many centuries. Against this unchanging background, it also illustrates the impermanence of other features. Other stories are concerned with 'journeys' in the spiritual realm, as ghosts seek reconciliation with the fact of death. The soul's experience as it travels through limbo, and the extent to which harmony is achieved, enable the author to infer the quality of his earthly life. Mackay Brown also makes dramatic use of the more conventional metaphor of the crossroads to explore the boundary between life and death. As in the ghost stories,



'realistic' narrative is suspended in favour of a less clearly-defined time-scale. The technique has some affinity with that of The Drowning Brothers, but even more than in the poem, the distinction between the physical and metaphysical 'worlds' is deliberately obscured, thereby emphasizing the element of ambiguity. The latter tends to be associated with greater concentration on Biblical imagery and symbolism, yet a more significant factor is the author's adherence to the pattern of mythology whereby familiar aspects of earthly existence recur in a metaphysical context.

The 'crossroads' motif is also associated with the idea of free will, since it represents a series of different paths which the soul can choose to follow. These invariably have Christian connotations, but they are also consistent with the cultural background experienced by the soul during its earthly sojourn. Thus, Samuel Whaness's almost fatal fishing accident in Greenvoe is depicted in terms of a pilgrimage in search of a Calvinist heaven, while in the concluding chapter of the novel, the description of the Skarf's demise makes both literal and metaphorical use of the motif of a final 'voyage', with allusions to the Marxist vision of Utopia.

The stories generally rely on a specific variant of the 'voyage' theme which is stated in the opening pages and whose 'development' becomes the focus of the narrative. By

contrast, all three novels are constructed around a network of journeys of greater or lesser importance, and these are frequently associated with other metaphorical devices, or with symbolic patterns in the text. Greenvoe contains a striking example of the latter in that Bert Kerston climbs down the cliff to rescue Samuel Whaness (Chapter 5), while his son is included amongst the group of islanders who, at the end of the book, climb up the cliff to reclaim Hellya after its destruction by industrial technology.

In Greenvoe, 'voyages' form one of the principal patterns which constitute 'reality' for the inhabitants of a small island village. Journeys for such a community have unusual significance at every level of experience. Their prominence is reflected in the fact that they feature in virtually all the strands of narrative from which the novel is constructed. The routine of everyday life includes journeys to the village shop, voyages to the fishing grounds, or to other islands. There are also a few regular visitors to the island, including an Indian pedlar who makes an annual 'pilgrimage' to Greenvoe to sell his wares. His long letter outlining his travels around the island provides one of the earliest indications that external influences are about to disrupt the community. In view of the predictability of life on the island, the arrival of an unknown 'visitor', and the unusual frequency of Mr Joseph Evie's journeys to Kirkwall have equally sinister implications. Travel, in all its aspects,

permeates the culture of the community. A significant strand of narration consists of letters from Ben Budge relaying news of the island to his brother who, like many Orcadians, has ventured abroad to find work and not returned. On the other hand, Mrs McKee has settled in the community, and although her life is reviewed in the form of a 'trial', it can be interpreted as a 'journey', incorporating various expeditions undertaken by herself and her son, culminating in their arrival in Greenvoe. Likewise, the Skarf 'voyages' into the past, his partly fictitious account of the island's history forming one of the main narrative threads of the novel. It concentrates on the various waves of settlers who have discovered and inhabited the island. The final chapter, describing the arrival of the latest 'newcomers', extends this aspect of the narrative. It also reflects the author's preoccupation with the element of ritual, for the harvest rite which concludes the book, embodying the Resurrection, can only be completed after the final hazardous journey to Hellya.

The ritual 'voyages' enshrined in the Orkneyinga Saga were a vital ingredient of Norse culture and mythology. In the introduction to their translation of the Saga, Palsson and Edwards point out that while Earl Rognvald's voyage to the Holy Land - 'which could be regarded as the central quest in the story'<sup>23</sup> - was ostensibly a pilgrimage, its principal feature was a battle, in accordance with the

Viking's warlike disposition. It highlighted the contradictions within Norse society, and in this respect, the career of St Magnus was no less important in that his pacificism could not be reconciled with the prevailing character of Norse life, and created further strife.

The most prominent motif in Mackay Brown's second novel is generally assumed to be that associated with weaving, as Magnus seeks the 'seamless garment of sanctity', yet there is no mention of this metaphor in the Orkneyinga Saga, nor of the parable of the marriage feast, with which it is linked in the novel. Nevertheless, these elaborations preserve the spirit of the earliest portrayal of Magnus (Orkneyinga Saga, Chapter 45) and their significance is enhanced by the fact that both are represented at the culmination of a quest involving a long and difficult journey. Moreover, Mackay Brown also elaborates the brief reference (Chapter 52) to the miraculous cures attributed to St Magnus by creating the character of 'Blind Mary'. Like Magnus, she embarks on a perilous journey, so that as in Greenvoe, the main strands of narrative are associated with the 'voyage' theme.

Even before he began using the Orkneyinga Saga as source material, Mackay Brown had written about St Magnus in the context of a journey. In The Road Home ('The Storm' and Other Poems), a familiar excursion provokes thoughts of Magnus's martyrdom. In his other early poem on the subject

('The Storm' and Other Poems, revised version in Loaves and Fishes), the reference to Egilsay contains an allusion to Magnus's voyage to the 'peace parley' at which he was betrayed.

The basis of the novel first appeared in Mackay Brown's reworking of the Saga account in An Orkney Tapestry (Pages 71/98). The addition of Jock and Mary's pilgrimage, which later became the final chapter of Magnus, as well as the 'weaving' imagery, derived from Thomas Graves's paraphrase of the Valkyries' Song (An Orkney Tapestry, Page 68), indicated that the principal metaphors had already been established. They also occurred in poems not directly connected with Magnus's career, The Coat, The Wedding Guest (Poems New and Selected). The subsequent stages involved expanding the Orkney Tapestry version into the play, The Loom of Light (first performed in 1972 and published in 1984) and thence into the novel (published in 1973). This was achieved primarily by developing the 'voyage' theme, for neither the associated 'weaving' or 'feast' motifs were capable of sustaining the narrative thread on their own. Furthermore, both motifs were explored in terms of their metaphysical potential, and were not capable of conveying a direct interpretation of the nature of Orcadian society during Magnus's life. In his preface to The Loom of Light, Mackay Brown indicated that the play grew from the final scene, reproduced in An Orkney Tapestry.

The main characteristic of this scene is that it consists almost entirely of dialogue, chiefly between Jock and Mary, but more briefly with the farmers, the wounded soldier, and the bishop whom they encounter. The structure of the scene is based entirely on the journey from Hamnavoe to Birsay, and it is by this means that the various members of the community are introduced. The remaining scenes were constructed in accordance with similar principles, and the more varied techniques mentioned by the author with regard to the novel were largely concerned with the use of the 'voyage' motif to create different levels of narrative.

The overall structure of both the play and the novel symbolizes the progress from ploughing to harvesting. In each case, the comparison between the different levels of society is carefully delineated, yet the symbolism transcends all divisions. This is particularly evident in the novel, where the ceremonial festivities of the gentry, which form the background to the activities of the peasants and tinkers, are more fully developed. The contrast between the different social strata is continually emphasized, not least by referring to the strip of sea separating the church and palace from the crofters' fields, though their respective rituals have the same connotations. The more complex narrative enables the author to describe events in several locations, and to counterpoint various aspects of the lives of the main protagonists. In addition, the three sacred

bridal songs have greater symbolic richness than the lines spoken by the chorus in the opening scene of the play. On the other hand, the choral injunctions concentrate on the journey which is to be repeated in the final scene, thereby bringing the action full-circle, while the visual aspect of Mans and Hild ploughing the hill throughout the scene also enhances this theme.

The complexity of the novel's second chapter as compared with the equivalent scene of the play stems from the device of including a long letter, enabling the author to summarize the history of the Earldom of Orkney, based on the Sagas. The metaphor of the 'seamless garment' provides an appropriate analogy, the conflicting factions arising from a rift in 'the coat of state'. The references to the 'Pax Borealis' introduce a metaphysical element, developing the 'hierarchies and orders of very sweet sound' mentioned in the first of the bridal songs. Nevertheless, the alternative pattern is stronger: 'confrontation, sword-clash, exile'. It reflects the importance of the quest in Norse culture, so that the predominance of the 'voyage' theme is thus entirely consistent with the society to which Magnus belonged. Its significance is amplified by the subsequent indication of Magnus's pacificism, which received its fullest expression during the voyage of conquest: The Battle of Menai Strait. The dramatic possibilities of the battle (Scene 3) are self-evident, but by availing himself of the different

narrative perspectives of the novel (Chapter 3), Mackay Brown demonstrates the extent to which such expeditions unified not only all levels of a particular society, but also the entire Viking empire. The portrayal of Mans is important in this respect. His participation in the battle is tentative, but his identification with the Norse cause is sufficient for him to abandon the rebellious attitude he had evinced in the opening chapter. The long ships, and the journeys undertaken in them, symbolize a 'community' in which social barriers are largely irrelevant. They are associated with a ritual whose meaning is universally understood. Such a context emphasizes the singularity of Magnus's behaviour. It also offers a glimpse of the united society which Mackay Brown is inclined to idealize in view of the fact that the twentieth century has been characterized by the decline of the 'genuine community' defined by Raymond Williams as 'a community of persons linked not merely by one kind of relationship, work, or friendship, or family, but many interlocking kinds'.<sup>24</sup>

Although the social cohesion sketched in Chapter 3 of Magnus is achieved in accordance with the Norse warrior tradition, its establishment exerts a strong appeal for Mackay Brown, given his concern to preserve the identity of Orkney life. The particular significance of Magnus for the author is that he embodies the possibility of transforming the warlike symbolism into that of a pacifist crusade - hence Mackay Brown's equal fascination with Earl Rognvald's voyage to Jerusalem - and the remainder of both the play and the



novel is concerned with this change of focus.

Henceforth, the emphasis switches to Magnus's spiritual development, though the 'voyage' and the associated metaphors retain their importance. The fourth chapter, 'The Temptations', can be thought of in terms of a 'journey', since the five temptations encapsulate significant phases of Magnus's career. It is essentially a meditation and does not appear in the play.

In both the play and the novel (Scene 4 and Chapter 5, respectively), the destructive effects of the civil war are described from the viewpoint of the peasants, as opposing bands of horsemen ride across recently ploughed corn fields. These images are particularly strong in the novel, where they are contrasted with an account of the peasants' labours during the early summer. They are reinforced by the tinkers' narrative, consisting of stories heard during their journeys around the islands. The chapter concludes with a recollection of the journey Magnus undertakes after resisting the final temptation.

Although 'weaving' imagery in relation to the 'coat of state' and the 'seamless garment' dominates Scene 5 and Chapter 6, respectively, the structure reflects the significance of pilgrimages in Medieval Orkney culture as tinkers and representatives of the gentry return separately to the church

at Birsay in search of an actual, or a symbolic cure for their different 'wounds'. In both the play and the novel, this episode functions as the prelude to the climax of the narrative.

The play and the novel approach Magnus's martyrdom from different perspectives, but in each case the 'journey' theme is important. Scene 6 of the play opens with a reference to the Crucifixion, and this is subsequently developed in the speech by Earl Hakon in which he imagines Magnus embarking on a voyage to Jerusalem to walk the Stations of the Cross before becoming a monk in Ireland. Magnus, however, envisages his martyrdom in terms of a different 'journey', and it requires the narrative techniques of the novel to describe it in detail since it has metaphysical, as well as physical implications. After an introduction in which the Saga account of Magnus's voyage to Egilsay is paraphrased in the style of Medieval English, Chapter 7 begins by counterpointing the same journey with a dream in which Magnus wanders through a labyrinth of city streets in search of the weaver who is fashioning the 'seamless garment' he must have in order that his metaphysical transformation can be completed. After a section in which the narrative switches to the twentieth century (involving a species of 'time-travelling'), the dream is resumed as Magnus meditates on the nature of time in the context of the Mass. In its second formulation, the dream is concerned with an image of

purgatory in which the soul is confronted with the prospect of drifting 'about forever outside, in ever deepening darkness and cold' (Magnus, Page 142). It is an allegory, not only of contemporary society as the author perceives it, but also of his view of the influence of 'modernism' on the creative imagination. On the one hand, the vision of a 'bare, white . . . corridor' leading to 'a small cube-shaped interior, full of hard light' (Magnus, Page 141), suggests a dogmatic interpretation of 'truth' which excludes a great deal of 'reality'. On the other, in the first of the twentieth-century episodes, an analogy is drawn between the state of confusion described and the lack of a clear narrative perspective. Elsewhere in the chapter, the analogy is strengthened by sudden switches of narrative, of location and of time. Thus, having extended the 'voyage' symbolism to the organization of both society and the creative imagination, Mackay Brown offers a meditation on the various forms of sacrifice practised throughout human history with particular reference to the Crucifixion. The association of Magnus' martyrdom with the Christian sacrifice, the restoration of peace in Orkney, and the miraculous cures resulting from pilgrimages to Magnus's tomb are in accordance with the Orkneyinga Saga.

The concluding chapter of the novel adheres closely to the final scene of the play as attention is focused on the tinkers' journey to Birsay. There is no longer any need for

an elaborate form of narrative as the 'voyage' theme takes precedence over the 'seamless garment' and the parable of the marriage feast. Both return to the image which had been the original source of inspiration.

Mackay Brown had already written about Earl Rognvald's crusade in his poetry and short stories, but it was such journeys as that described at the end of Magnus and The Loom of Light which became the model for these later voyages. The metaphor of a voyage undertaken in a stained and torn coat, as mentioned in Magnus (Page 126) also provided the impulse for Mackay Brown's third novel, 'Time in a Red Coat', where it forms the basis of the narrative. Voyages are also a feature of the play, The Well, which shares the symbolism of Time in a Red Coat to a significant degree. In both these works, the specifically Catholic symbolism of Magnus and The Loom of Light is abandoned, but the fact that both are concerned with time and the four elements means that the metaphor continues to fulfil a metaphysical role.

In the play, the well, symbolized by The Keeper of the Well, is the focus of the island and consequently of the island's history. Accordingly, its structure is similar to that of Fishermen with Ploughs, or Solstice of Light, even though these are both poetic sequences, in that the 'voyage' theme is associated with the impact on the island of successive waves of settlers. Each of the first five scenes involves a

'journey' through time, demarcating the main phases of Orkney history in terms of the specific contribution the various 'voyagers' to Orkney culture. After an interlude (Scene 6), the emphasis changes as time is no longer perceived in terms of ritual, but as 'progress'. The past is abandoned in favour of a future described as a 'golden road', and the 'voyage' symbolism reflects the gradual desertion of the island. 'The Keeper of the Well' departs (Scene 7), and the well no longer functions as the focus of the community (Scene 8). The structure of Scene 9 is built around another type of 'journey', as a sequence of doors is opened to reveal the four elements and finally a labyrinth leading to ultimate knowledge. However, as in Fishermen with Ploughs, the pursuit of knowledge leads to widespread destruction, and the concluding scene of the play comprises another voyage as a group of survivors rediscover the islands and prepare to begin a new phase of history based on the traditional life-cycle, symbolized by the well.

Throughout the scene, the voyagers follow the music produced by the boy playing the flute. In Time in a Red Coat, the girl undertaking the long journey, which forms the structure of the novel, also plays the flute and again its music is symbolic, implying the last vestiges of a harmonious society. Yet despite the importance of music as the novel's central metaphor, Time in a Red Coat has not attracted Maxwell Davies's attention. The reason may be that the exploration

of the principal features and symbols of traditional storytelling, on which the novel is based, is rather schematic and fails to break new ground. The masque, embodying the main landmarks of life and the outline of the four elements in both their creative and destructive aspects (Chapter 1), reworks material from A Spell for Greencorn (Scene 6), and The Well (Scene 9), respectively, and equally familiar is the notion of the 'voyage' through history, evoked by slight changes of literary style and occasional references to significant historical figures or events. The long westward journey precipitated by the expanding Mongol Empire is new, but its conclusion in the Orkney Islands is predictable. The girl in the torn coat, who proclaims her age as 1,500 years (Chapter 14) combines aspects of the two main figures of Orkney legend, but little attempt is made to develop the underlying symbolism - good and evil, dove and dragon - which is presented merely in terms of contrast. The book's construction ensures that the author's usual themes are represented, culminating in a further condemnation of 'progress'. Yet the idea of viewing the conflicts of the twentieth-century from a nineteenth-century perspective, in order to discover the source of the crisis that has afflicted contemporary 'civilization', is problematic in that, as the concluding chapters make clear, it illustrates Mackay Brown's tendency, mentioned by Douglas Dunn, 'to outline an ideal by retrospection, creating an image of the past to act as a

spell against the present and future. By concentrating on the 'voyage' theme, the author has failed to achieve what Dunn has called for: 'A harshness, an indignation that Brown may be unsuited by temperament, or poetic beliefs, to

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provide'. Ultimately, Time in a Red Coat is about the creative process: the embellishment of a simple tale with metaphor and symbol as it travels through time. In its final rendering (Chapter 16), the 'story' is imbued with the characteristics of legend and transformed into a child's Fable.

At the deepest level, Mackay Brown's play for voices, The Voyage of St Brandon, is also about the imaginative faculty and its capacity to transform 'reality' through language. Both the Wandering Scholar (Scene 1) and St Brandon bear a superficial resemblance to The Blind Fiddler, and in Scene 13, the scribe is instructed to concentrate less on the 'facts' of the voyage than on their symbolic significance and underlying harmony. This scene places the 'journey' in perspective, making it clear it is another Fable, embodying the author's preoccupation with purgatory and the illusory notion of an earthly paradise, which is the essence of 'progress'. Its structural features are equally familiar from other works, and Brandon's final speeches recapitulate many of Mackay Brown's most persistent ideas, previously incorporated into the Notebook previously attributed to Storm Kolson (A Spell for Greencorn:

Appendix). Central to his credo is the importance of the Word, embodying 'order, meaning and pattern', and the need to express it as simply as possible. Evil arises from the distortion of the word, and the best way to ensure against this is to rely on the forms of folktales and legends: hence the structure and symbolic significance of the 'voyage' theme, which is applicable to any tale involving a quest. The Voyage of St Brandon is concerned with the search for a terrestrial harmony that will reflect its celestial counterpart, and it is frequently symbolized by Mackay Brown in terms of music. Accordingly, when providing texts for Maxwell Davies - Westerlings and Solstice of Light - the 'voyage' theme figured prominently.

Maxwell Davies's use of the 'Voyage' theme.

'Westerlings', 'Solstice of Light' and 'First Ferry to Hoy'.

Apart from the occasional carol setting, Westerlings was Maxwell Davies's first substantial unaccompanied choral work for more than a decade. In contrast to his earlier settings of Latin and Medieval English, Mackay Brown's poetic sequence, evoking the first Norse settlers in Orkney, gave him the opportunity to write such a work using modern English. By the late 1970s, Maxwell Davies's involvement with Mackay Brown's texts was such that he had absorbed a large



measure of the writer's influence into his music. Links began to be established between many of the Mackay Brown settings and the purely orchestral or instrumental compositions of the same period.

### Westerlings.

Westerlings (1977), described as 'four songs and a prayer with seascapes', can be cited as a key example. It is generally considered a companion piece of A Mirror of Whitening Light in that both works are derived from the same 'magic square' (of Mercury), but a closer examination of its structure reveals a number of characteristics which have become part of the composer's 'symphonic' vocabulary.

Regarding Westerlings as a vocal symphony entails ignoring other possible interpretations, yet while the comparison of the overall plan of the work with a conventional four-movement structure may be questioned, its symphonic character is made manifest by reason of other features which it shares with the composer's essays in the form. Its architecture is similar to the opening movement of the First Symphony, where a complex series of 'transformation processes', involving short motifs and a good deal of contrasting material, is enclosed within a 'frame' announced at the beginning and repeated in modified form at the end. Insofar as all four movements are unified by a single

compositional scheme, this observation can be extended to the entire work. Thus, the sudden upsurge of tension at 'A black hoof whirled on our coast' involves a more violent illustration of the procedure adopted in the second movement of the First Symphony, where a slow movement is gradually transformed into a scherzo. At the same time, by developing the notion of a 'transformation process' that would last for the duration of the work and would be associated with several texts, the composer was preparing the ground for a more ambitious application of this organizing principle in his orchestral scores. The care taken over creating a wide range of textures for an unaccompanied choir may well have its origins in the concept of 'orchestration' whereby the 'instrumentation functions simply to make the musical argument clear'.<sup>27</sup>

The creation of choral 'seascapes' also invites comparison with the larger orchestral scores, where the depiction of unfolding landscapes or seascapes is associated with large musical structures influenced by Sibelius's symphonic style. In this context, the 'voyage' theme performs two functions: providing a metaphor for the various 'pathways' through the 'magic square' which constitute the 'transformation processes', and, above all, establishing a narrative thread on which both text and music can be constructed.

The opening bars of Westerlings give a clear indication

of the composer's methods. A four-note motif is announced by the altos and sopranos comprising the notes c' sharp d' sharp e' f', followed by a re-statement before the completion of the first version. The c' sharp and d' sharp of the repetition are thus heard in conjunction with the e' and f' of the original. The overlapping process continues with the first version being extended while the second provides a harmonic background. a' b' and c'' sharp are introduced, and the fact that the last note sounds an octave higher than on its initial appearance gives the music a degree of impetus, suggesting the beginning of a voyage. An element of symmetry is also created in that the additional material, like the original motif, spans an interval of a major third. More significantly, the repeat of the four-note motif and the return to C sharp indicates its subsequent use as a point of reference in conjunction with a possible 'tonal centre'. Within a few bars, Maxwell Davies has begun to explore the harmonic implications and intervallic relationships of his basic motif, but it is temporarily abandoned as the first 'seascape' gathers momentum.

The sound of the sea permeates both text and music. The nature of the commission, for the Uppsala Academy Chamber Choir, encouraged the choice of poems, stressing the links between the Orkney Islands and Scandinavia, and by selecting, where possible, words which tended to be associated with the Norsemen ('Oarsman', 'helmsman', plus the Scandinavian

name, Baldur), Mackay Brown provided plenty of opportunities for the creation of sounds which reflected the harsh conditions that would have been encountered on the voyage between these two ancient kingdoms. The composer's creative imagination was liberated through an enhanced awareness of the sounds of his environment, and while Westerlings does not constitute his first evocation of the sea, the sounds of the words, as much as their literal meaning, drew from him a wide variety of choral textures ranging from solo singing to passages of homophony, or complex polyphony.

Mackay Brown's depiction of the Vikings' journey to Orkney owes little to the account of the settlement of the islands in Orkneyinga Saga, Sections 4/8. Nevertheless, the tone of the poems is in accordance with surviving verses written by the first rulers of Orkney (reproduced in these sections of the Saga), and Maxwell Davies's first 'seascape', beginning on the final beat of Bar 5, establishes the prevailing mood of the verse. The increasing movement of the sea is depicted through a precise manipulation of the basically four-part textures; the singers are required either to hum or vocalize, and it is through various exchanges of role, together with carefully organized gradations of dynamic levels and different registers that an element of turbulence is conveyed. This is a good example of the capacity of Mackay Brown's poetry to inspire a musical response in terms of 'pure sound', and when the motif recurs, it becomes clear

that the material is already being subjected to the composer's 'transformation processes', influencing considerations of timbre no less than harmony or melody. At the same time, it illustrates the way in which Maxwell Davies develops a fragment of music into a largescale work by blending the 'seascapes' with the sound of the words to form a continuous structure. During a brief transition, the word 'Oarsman' emerges naturally from the vocalized texture, so that an impression of elision is created in respect of the opening words of 'A Golden Whale'. The repetitions of 'Oarsman', and its distribution between the various sections of the choir give the music an impetus that is well suited to the first two lines of the poem:

'Oarsman, we drive a golden whale  
Westward each day.'

The setting of this poem is designed to give an impression of the measured progress of a long ship, and the sustained strength needed to combat a powerful sea. This is achieved by extending the vowel sounds of key words: 'drive', 'golden', 'whale', as well as by dynamic contrasts and the creation of an active texture through staggered entries of the choir. The technique recurs in Sections 5 and 8, thereby assuming considerable importance in the process of integration, not least because the distinction between the purely vocalized movements and those involving a text is

reduced. Later in the work, another form of integration is employed which is even more closely allied to the text.

The function of the second 'seascape' in relation to the setting of A Golden Whale is sufficiently clear for the 'symphonic' aspect of the work to be apparent. The poem, with its references to hunger, encourages a greater degree of harmonic complexity, much of it stemming from an increasing reliance on dissonance. The intensity of the music is only dissipated during the second 'seascape', and as this tension is related to the composer's 'Orkney' works, rather than to the music-theatre pieces of the late 1960s, the first three sections of Westerlings can be interpreted as comprising the 'first movement'.

Nevertheless, it is characteristic of Maxwell Davies that an element of ambiguity is involved, since the second 'seascape' can also be thought of as affecting a transition. Yet to pursue the 'symphonic' analogy, the reflective fourth section has a good deal in common with many of the composer's recent slow movements. The opening reference to a four-note motif - c' sharp and e' held together as a minor third, plus e' and f' - is typical of the composer's recent practice of establishing audible connections between the various movements of a work, but equally characteristic is the fact that in common with many of Maxwell Davies's extended adagios, there are passages of sustained melodic writing for

the upper voices, supported by the kind of decorative embellishments frequently given to the higher woodwind instruments in the symphonies. In addition, the composer takes full advantage of Mackay Brown's text to interpolate a brief, but powerful climax at the words 'A black hoof whirled on our coast'. This is built up from the re-introduction of the minor third already mentioned, and is initiated by the male voices before being taken up by the rest of the choir. The effect can be likened to a squall, and is a feature of other 'seascapes' in Maxwell Davies's recent music. Once the impact of this brief outburst has receded, the melodic idea is re-established, but only in abbreviated form, supported by a harmonic accompaniment which emphasizes the bleakness of the closing lines of the poem:

' . . . the hearts of  
Hunter and hungerer coldly furrowed.'

The following sections tend to be somewhat longer and more ambitious in terms of their content. This is a feature of Maxwell Davies's use of 'transformation processes' and of the fact that these grow in complexity as the work proceeds. It is not confined to his recent works, but in the majority of his 'Orkney' pieces, reflects either the formal organization of a Mackay Brown text, together with its content, or the outlines of traditional 'sonata-form'. In both cases, a narrative context is created, and the 'voyage' theme,

expressed in words by Mackay Brown, depicted in sound by Maxwell Davies, establishes a link between text and music.

The third 'seascape' is not only longer than its predecessor, but also richer as regards its textual, harmonic and even melodic variety. Greater use is made of contrasting registers, so that the basic motif and the principal intervallic relationships derived from it are heard throughout the full range of the choir. The C sharp is used as a 'pivot', though without suggesting any 'tonal' implications. It initiates this section, and functions as an almost constant point of reference until its final appearances, spread over two octaves, sung by two sopranos. Equally striking is the way passages of florid writing for the sopranos are transformed into a massive vocal texture of indeterminate pitch at the climax of the 'seascape'.

The setting of Our Gods Uncaring is notable for the fact that the text is entrusted almost exclusively to one of the soprano lines, the remainder of the choir being required to employ several kinds of vocalization throughout, including keening by the other sopranos. The words tend to stand out from the texture, rather than forming an integral part of the overall sound as in earlier sections. More significantly, the basic motif is no longer recognizable and the absence of familiar ideas, together with the unusually eerie textures, is again entirely in keeping with the sombre mood of the



poem. This section represents the furthest development of the basic material and its position in the overall scheme is confirmed by the subsequent 'seascape', which begins the process of 'recapitulation' by combining many of the ideas already heard in its predecessors. It has a particularly close connection with the opening section of the work, for besides the fact that its harmonies are built up from the main motivic material, the strands of melody which are then sung by the upper voices, as well as the underlying harmony, are clearly related to the material which follows the original presentation of the basic motif. Moreover, the subsequent trills establish a link with the second 'seascape'. This also marks the first stage in the unravelling of the 'transformation processes', but again, there is an element of transition, so that it is left to the setting of the final poem to complete the 'journey' embarked upon by both writer and composer.

Besides the thematic links between the first and last poems, there are similarities of construction. The opening pair of lines in each amounts to sixteen syllables, while there is only a difference of one syllable between each subsequent pair. Moreover, Lines 3 and 4 of each poem echo one another very strikingly:

'A Golden Whale' -

' . . . we strained the west

In welters of crimson, and yet are hungry.'

'Land-Fall' -

'We have broken a hundred horizons

Sieved wave and wind, and still are hungry.'

These similarities are reflected in the music. Despite their different tempo indications, Sections 2 and 8 both employ a variable metrical pattern involving time signatures of 3/4, 3/8 and 5/8. Each section begins with an almost identically harmonized phrase; in each, there follows the same rippling texture, created by staggering the entries of the voices. The settings of both poems are closely related throughout, so that the process of re-traversing the earlier material is developed to the point of almost exact repetition by the time the concluding section is reached. All this points to the tension in many of Maxwell Davies's recent work arising from his use of both 'symphonic' and cyclic forms, and it is worth noting that the First Symphony was being written at the same time as Westerlings. Furthermore, as the symphony was originally conceived as a single movement, provisionally entitled Black Pentecost, it was evolving into the familiar four-movement structure while the choral work was being composed.

The manner in which Westerlings resolves into the final prayer is also redolent of the symphonies. This is a contemplative section in which the words - sung in the ancient Orkney dialect of Norn - are presented in the form of a 'chorale' whose individual phrases are linked by sustained two-part harmony. In the concluding pages, the separate components of the 'chorale' coalesce into a homogeneous texture as the harmony is crystallized. Each of the phrases starts at a successively lower pitch, to create the effect of the music 'winding down', as well as the idea of the long ship reaching its destination, and a satisfactory resolution is achieved without recourse to traditional 'tonality'.

It should be stressed that the idea of constructing a work on a continuous sequence of 'transformations' is not limited to Maxwell Davies's recent scores, but during the 'Orkney' period he has developed the technique in order to incorporate individual movements into an overall scheme. The three symphonies are the most obvious examples, not only because the separate movements of each tend to explore the same material from different perspectives, while functioning as parts of an overall scheme, but also because they form a larger pattern of 'tonal' relationships.<sup>28</sup> However, the principle was not confined to orchestral works, but was equally applicable to the vocal music.

When Mackay Brown provided a new sequence of poems for

Solstice of Light, expanding the 'Voyage' theme of Westerlings to cover the other groups of settlers who have inhabited the Orkney Islands from prehistoric times to the present, Maxwell Davies responded by developing the 'symphonic' aspect of his previous choral work in accordance with the specific requirements of the commission.

Solstice of Light.

Solstice of Light was written for the St Magnus Singers - a local choir - to perform during the 1979 St Magnus Festival, and was based on a harmonic language comparable with the Prayer of Westerlings. The choral sections are 'tonal', and exert a strong influence on the character of the 'transformation processes'. These are placed within the suggestion of a cyclic framework in which the music oscillates between the 'tonal' regions of C and E flat, and they comprise a direct counterpart to the organization of the poem. They also incorporate solo material of considerable virtuosity: the vocal movements contain some demanding passages for tenor and are interspersed with movements for solo organ which are equally challenging. Comparisons have been made with O Magnum Mysterium, since both works alternate choral sections with instrumental 'commentaries', and the composer has integrated a number of diverse elements into his style. In terms of its choral writing, Stephen Arnold's

reference to Maxwell Davies's 'carol style' can be applied, in that as in O Magnum Mysterium, it is based on a personal interpretation of modal harmony involving 'flattened third, fifth, sixth and seventh scale degrees, with occasionally flattened supertonic and double flattened seventh'.<sup>29</sup> There are modal passages in Solstice of Light, and the instrumental 'commentaries' are based on transformations of the choral material. However, the most perceptive comparison between the two works is to be found in George Mackay Brown's observation that O Magnum Mysterium already contains many qualities which can be related to the austerity of an Orkney winter. This may well have influenced the fact that the text of Solstice of Light is concerned with 'the drama of light and darkness in the far north'.<sup>30</sup> Characteristically, the 'voyage' theme is accompanied by most of the author's principal motifs, especially those associated with St Magnus, who is frequently invoked by the solo tenor, and they contribute to his vision of Orkney's unique cultural identity which is proclaimed in the opening lines of the sequence:

'We are the new hills and lochs and shores,

Lissom shapes from ice.

The grey hands of the ice lie folded now, far north.'

The text is a poetic evocation of the history of the Islands and covers similar ground to the Skarf's narrative in Greenvoe, but without the Marxist interpretation. (Maxwell

Davies was composing Black Pentecost, based on the final chapter of Greenvoe, concurrently with Solstice of Light).

The composer presents his setting on three distinct levels. The organ music depicts the land- and seascapes with stark harmonies reflecting the rugged environment. Its function is analogous to that of the orchestra in Black Pentecost insofar as it forms the background against which the various waves of settlers are described by the chorus. Yet because it is one of the main participants in the drama of Orkney history, it becomes the focus of attention in the solo 'commentaries'. The work's Christian significance is conveyed through the solo tenor, who appears at critical moments when the Orcadian heritage is threatened. Solstice of Light is a cantata incorporating 'concertante' and 'symphonic' elements. The presentation of different facets of the music in alternation is in accordance with Maxwell Davies's customary practice. Above all, the form and content of Mackay Brown's text, as well as his identification with its themes, provided the composer with the necessary structural guidelines, enabling him to avoid having to rely on 'closed' forms. Nevertheless, in evoking the rugged outlines of Hoy, where the poem-sequence is located, the twelve-bar organ prelude alludes to such a form, in that, as Lyn Davies has observed, it is built on 'a pivotal E flat/F bass line upon which different harmonies may be superimposed and is sometimes extended<sup>31</sup> scalically to provide a passacaglia-like subject'.

A similar figure recurs in the ninth movement, where the organ's introductory material comprises an elaboration of a four-note pattern originally heard in the bass. This may have a bearing on the work's overall form, for a possible interpretation might emphasize the element of symmetry whereby the first seven sections, which are concerned with the prehistory of the Orkney Islands, are counterbalanced by Sections 9/14. The symmetry is clarified by the fact that while Section 7 starts in C minor and ends in E flat major, Section 14 begins in E flat major and resolves into C minor.

However, an alternative interpretation might stress the extent to which Maxwell Davies relies on various modifications of 'ternary' form, enabling the music to evolve in relation to the text. The extent of the composer's fidelity to the poetry can be gained from the eighth section, whose pastoral quality is enhanced by the choice of a reed stop for the organ accompaniment. Maxwell Davies follows the implications of the lines:

'Islands and islanders dance together  
In the Solstice of Light'

to mould the regular line-lengths and stress patterns of Mackay Brown's verse into a clearly-defined rhythm. Among the methods adopted to accommodate the text to the prevailing

rhythm, groups of words are sung at half the speed of the main tempo: 'Barley and oat'. This is one of the key phrases, whose repetition not only ensures that text and music remain synchronized, but also creates an additional emphasis. Solstice of Light and 'with flame and song' are among other examples subjected to similar treatment. In most cases, the repeated phrases have four syllables to fit the rhythm naturally, but variety is achieved by occasionally repeating phrases with six syllables at half speed: 'Islands and islanders', so that a degree of syncopation is produced. Similar results are obtained by altering the time signature of the organ accompaniment to a speed proportionately slower than the prevailing tempo. This happens at the lines:

'The new islanders

Have quartered the fecund sun', etc.

There are also instances of the repetition of phrases after additional lines of the poem have been set, so that they appear 'out of context' in relation to the original: 'With flame and song'.

Nevertheless, the broader paragraphs of the text have been preserved. The 'middle section' occurs after approximately two-thirds of the movement, in conjunction with lines 11/13 of the poem. These are in sharp contrast to the preceding lines, evoking the sense of mystery that clings to the Celtic



monuments:

'What are the lonely strangers with crossed hands?  
They stand, grey shapes,  
Between the broch and the forge of dark edges.'

Maxwell Davies responds with a reflective setting whose impact can only be appreciated in terms of the whole movement. The (A) section corresponds to the first four lines of the poem and involves a progression from G to D. The setting of Lines 5/8 can be considered a variant of the previous material in that the rhythm is identical and a similar progression is involved; yet besides the change of organ registration and the introduction of a syncopated accompaniment, the melodic element is sufficiently different for it to be classed as a distinct entity, rather than a modification of (A). A1 is an exact repetition of (A), even though it is only concerned with two lines (9 and 10). Thus, the 'middle section' represents a third sequence of material. Besides its slow tempo, it is distinguished from the rest of the movement by the emphasis on homophony and the fact that only one phrase is repeated. It is also based on a different 'tonal' progression, beginning on B flat, modulating to G (end of Line 12) and thence to D, in preparation for a repeat of A1. As previously, it is associated with two lines of text, but Maxwell Davies adopts a different method of aligning the poetry to the music. The phrase 'dust-of-gold',

in Line 14, is set twice, but the main emphasis is placed on the final line:

'Little silver brothers they called the fish',

which is sung several times, either in part, or complete, with words overlapping, at half speed, as well as in syncopation with the main tempo. It is a compendium of the 'devices' employed throughout the movement and as such, functions as a 'coda'.

Even more than Westerlings, this section demonstrates the extent to which Maxwell Davies's music and Mackay Brown's poetry form an integral unity as compared with the elements of conflict generated by the composer's preoccupation with the writings of James Joyce and Georg Trakl in the later 1960s. Mackay Brown's poem is another example of his inclination to idealize the past, but it also exemplifies the tradition with which Maxwell Davies has readily identified. He expressed the essence of the folk and religious themes which had formed the background of his earlier settings of Mackay Brown texts, and after developing related aspects of Solstice of Light in settings concerned with the ability of the present-day Orkney community to withstand the impact of modern industrial technology, Maxwell Davies re-created the mood of the eighth section in another piece involving a

journey, for which he supplied his own text: First Ferry to Hoyl.

First Ferry to Hoy.

First Ferry to Hoy extends the principle successfully adopted in Solstice of Light of incorporating musicians of varying ability: a percussion ensemble of primary school children; a slightly older recorder group (ten and eleven year-olds); a mixed teenage choir and a professional ensemble of fourteen players (originally the London Sinfonietta). The text is in accordance with Mackay Brown in terms of its organization, subject-matter, and even vocabulary. It is based on a sighting of a school of whales during the ferry crossing from Stromness to Hoy - the kind of incident which frequently occurs in Mackay Brown's poetry, for example, Ploughman and Whales (Fishermen with Ploughs, page 54).

Such events have their basis in 'realism', but Maxwell Davies follows Mackay Brown by imbuing this particular experience with a sense of mystery. The extent of Maxwell Davies's identification with Orkney in general, and Mackay Brown's writings in particular can be gauged from the close correspondence between text and music, the fact that the work is again concerned with a voyage and that its overall structure is closely modelled on that of Westerlings, with the instrumental sections functioning as 'townscapes' or 'seascapes'.

In view of Maxwell Davies's recent attempts to clarify and simplify his harmonic thinking, it is worth noting that the modal or tonal implications of First Ferry to Hoy no longer make any distinction between professional and educational music. This is exemplified by the fact that in the introduction, there is a specific reference to the opening measures of Sinfonia Concertante, including the same 'tonal centre' of F, and that in Section 6, the series of trumpet calls on A are drawn from the slow movement of the Brass Quintet. At the same time, the Prologue of Resurrection contains several allusions to First Ferry to Hoy, including similar melodic phrases and harmonic progressions, as well as references to the same 'tonal' regions. More significantly, First Ferry to Hoy originated as part of the London Sinfonietta's education programme, involving schools of the Inner London Education Authority, and together with The Peat Cutters, for youth choir and youth brass band, it represented Maxwell Davies's first steps in applying the principles he had established in Orkney to a wider community.

Notes.

- 1 National Sound Archive, 13th March 1984.
- 2 Record No. DSL012.
- 3 Conference of the Royal Musical Association, Keele University, December 1985.
- 4 Tempo No. 119, 1976, Pages 20/22.
- 5 Record No. DSL012.
- 6 P. Griffiths, 1982, 2, Page 83.
- 7 Contact No. 19, 1978, Pages 26/29. See also P. Griffiths, Op. Cit., Pages 72/78, especially Page 73.
- 8 In accordance with Mackay Brown's 'realization' of a spinning-song from Njal's Saga, the composer introduced a weaving motif into his initial pathway through the 'square'. The first verse is sung to the top five lines of the 'square' which are traversed in the manner of a shuttle - from left to right, right to left, etc. (fig. 1). The path through the remainder of the 'square' is less systematic, influenced by the more dramatic character of the text, but the setting of the song concludes with C sharp, the final note of the 'square'.
- 9 Musical Times, Volume CXIII, 1977.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 S. Pruslin (Editor), 1979, Page 47.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 A. Bold, 1978, Page 106.
- 14 Tempo No. 117, 1976, Pages 32/33.

- 15 P. Griffiths, 1982, 2, Page 88.
- 16 Tempo No. 117, Pages 32/33
- 17 P. Griffiths, Op. Cit., Page 88.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Tempo No. 117, Pages 32/33.
- 20 P. Griffiths, Op. Cit., Page 113.
- 21 Northrop Frye, in David Lodge (Editor), 1972, Page 425.
- 22 Ibid., Page 429.
- 23 H. Palsson and P. Edwards (translators), 1981, Page 16.
- 24 David Lodge (Editor), 1972, Page 589.
- 25 Poetry Nation 2, 1974, Pages 80/92.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 P. Griffiths, 1982, 2, Page 161.
- 28 S. Pruslin, in Tempo No. 153, 1985, Pages 2/6.
- 29 L. Foreman (Editor), 1975, Pages 71/85.
- 30 George Mackay Brown: 'I Know What I Like', B.B.C.  
Radio 3, 27th March 1982.
- 31 L. Davies in Musical Times, September 1984, Pages  
525/527.

THE MUSIC OF PETER MAXWELL DAVIES

BASED ON THE WRITINGS OF

GEORGE MACKAY BROWN

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## CHAPTER SIX

### Sketches.

An important legacy of Maxwell Davies's growing involvement with music education is the substantial collection of sketches housed at the Scottish Music Information Centre on permanent loan. These range from pre-compositional schemes to drafts of complete scores. Their general availability has reduced the significance of various analyses and dissertations which have sought to elucidate Maxwell Davies's compositional procedures, and at least one paper delivered to the Music Research Students' Conference made unacknowledged use of the sketches, though at the time their existence was little known. A complete thesis could be devoted to an account of these sketches, so this chapter confines itself to a few observations concerning the extent to which they underline the main features of Mackay Brown's influence, as well as a discussion of the similarities between the pre-compositional materials for different scores, and the fact that several works share the same structural characteristics.

It is the last two aspects which establish the strongest connections with Mackay Brown, because they illustrate the composer's tendency to explore both pre-compositional formulae and structural ideas in a number of works,



frequently involving different genres, in much the same way as the author develops a small number of themes in all his writings, including his journalism. A corollary of this is that many of the composer's 'abstract' works share the same compositional methods ('magic squares', etc.) as works involving settings of Mackay Brown texts, so that quite apart from his influence in encouraging Maxwell Davies to re-assess his attitude to tradition, or the fact that he has provided a 'model' for the composer's creation of his own texts, this is one way in which the author has exercised a certain power over the stylistic changes which have characterized the music of the 'Orkney' years. However, while there are indications that Maxwell Davies has sometimes used Mackay Brown's texts as substitutes for magic squares (see pages 252 and 280/281), this aspect of the sketches is open to an alternative interpretation: namely, the composer has assimilated the magic square patterns so thoroughly as the composition proceeds that he can abandon his preliminary workings long before the completion of the score.

It should be stressed that Maxwell Davies's output during the 1970s and 1980s has involved modifying, rather than abandoning the compositional techniques he developed in the 1960s, just as he has continued to be preoccupied with the distinction between 'reality' and 'appearance', 'truth' and 'falsity', etc. Yet as this, and the subsequent chapters will attempt to show, his metamorphosis into a 'symphonic'

composer has prevented him from successfully recapturing the style of the 1960s, even in the opera, Resurrection, originally conceived in 1963. The crucial factors are Maxwell Davies's increasing emphasis on objectivity of expression and stylistic unity, as exemplified in his choice of texts. The Runic inscriptions of Stone Litany, and the poems selected from Sections 4 and 5 of Fishermen with Ploughs for the song-cycle, Fiddlers at the Wedding represent the greatest possible degree of detachment, and this is reflected in the fact that the sketches make no obvious references to the problems associated with word-setting, apart from writing the words above the music and ensuring that their rhythmic properties are observed. Though Fiddlers at the Wedding was written after Stone Litany, it will be considered first, because it involves the composer's response to actual poetry, as opposed to a 'dead' language.

#### Fiddlers at the Wedding.

The close connection Mackay Brown draws between ceremony and art, 'what ye call poem, pattern, dance. One cold act of beauty (in default of sanctity)' (A Spell for Greencorn, Page 62), helps to explain Maxwell Davies's changing reaction to some important aspects of 'modernism'. In an illuminating article about Iannis Xenakis, Guy Protheroe pointed to the intimate connection between music and mathematics since the

1  
'earliest formulations of theories of music'. He observed that the bond between number and music was particularly strong in the middle ages, manifesting itself in the many examples of Medieval music which were based on architectural principles. Music and mathematics were only separated 'when music became directly expressive. It was when the 'romantic' movement reached its apogee, in the earlier twentieth-century, that a number of composers, seeking an escape, turned again to mathematical principles, initially through the invention of the twelve-note technique'.<sup>2</sup> The sketches for Fiddlers at the Wedding do not include a numerical system, insofar as the structure of the poems determines that of the songs. The fact that the poems are all concerned, to some extent, with the ceremonial aspects of the community, obviates the need for 'magic squares', with their connotations of ceremonial and ritual, even though Mackay Brown indicates that the old ceremonies which gave Rackwick a sense of focus, have lost their significance. The formal qualities of the poetry encouraged the composer to revive and develop the manner of his early works. Similar trends are discernible in the work of many of his contemporaries, and the following observation of Boulez is applicable, given the literary content of Maxwell Davies's output during the 'Orkney' period: 'All large scale musical works with a literary base are built around this alternation of action and reflection (movement and immobility), individual and corporate expression; and this, furthermore, is the most -

or in any case one of the most - constant features of all human ceremonies, whatever their nature and to what ever civilization they belong, whether they are popular of the preserve of a cultured minority, secular entertainments or religious rites.<sup>3</sup>

The sketches exemplify the directness of the composer's response to Mackay Brown's writing. In terms of Barbara Docherty's distinction between composers who 'offer' the texts they are setting 'violence or reverence', citing Tippet and Britten as representatives of the two extremes,<sup>4</sup> Maxwell Davies conforms to the latter, but the emotional neutrality of the poems he has selected for Fiddlers at the Wedding means that he is confronted with few of the interpretive problems faced by his predecessors in the song-cycles examined by Docherty. There are nineteen pages of pencil sketches as opposed to twenty-three pages of pencil manuscript and there are close correspondences between the two, even though they are written in a different order. Thus, the first four pages are devoted to Peat Cutting, even though it has already been designated as the final poem in the cycle. An interesting feature of the setting is that the vocal line is divided into groups of pitches which are allocated numbers. Initially, the numbers run in sequences from 1 to 9, beginning at the start of the poem, but later, the order of the numbering becomes less predictable: 4, 3, 4, 5, 9, 8, 6, 5, 4, etc. Each of the numbered groups of pitches

tends to relate to a clause of the poem, which is constructed as a single sentence, though in some instances, the numbers refer to smaller groups covering only a few words or a phrase. The pitches associated with each number vary on successive appearances, but this is often a question of the order of the notes. In other cases, pitches are omitted, so that what remains is a distillation of the original outline. At this stage, the alto flute was envisaged as the main accompanying instrument, but in the score, this became the marimba. The pitch material was unaltered.

Peat Cutting depicts the relentless character of a traditional feature of Orkney life, thereby enhancing its ritual aspect. Maxwell Davies sets the text as one note per syllable with the exception of the key words 'Fire' and 'brightness'. The first is associated with the lines:

'And we tore dark squares, thick pages  
From the Book of Fire',

which is not only a literal description of the form in which peat is obtained and subsequently used, but also has biblical connotations, including the tablets of stone on which the commandments were supposed to have been inscribed. Further emphasis is achieved by adding a guitar, and by alluding to a dominant seventh, though without resolving the cadence. The second refers to the line:

'And his mouth was a sudden brightness',

which is linked to the boy's discovery of 'a wild bees' comb'. The contrast between the brightness of the honey and the blackness of the peat symbolizes the traditional conflict between light and dark, which inspires much of the imagery in Mackay Brown's work and also has religious significance.

Thereafter, the sketches adhere to the final order of the cycle. The title poem is fully scored, with an accompaniment for mandolin, guitar and percussion (including glass harmonica or brandy bowls placed on timpani, which functions as a resonator). With the exception of an ascending interval of more than two octaves at the words 'The bride cried out', the vocal writing is devoid of dramatic gestures and, as in Peat Cutting, conforms to the rhythm of the poem with one note per syllable. The introduction and coda on mandolin allude briefly to dance measures, but the only other feature of the accompaniment is a tendency to employ ostinato patterns. There is little attempt to illustrate the text.

A similar approach is adopted for the remaining poems, with the sentence structure being indicated by phrasing, or the interpolation of brief instrumental passages. The four songs are separated by instrumental interludes which are essentially distillations of the vocal line. An interesting

feature of the sketches is that in comparison with the actual text settings, more alterations have been made to the instrumental interludes, usually involving the omission of material before their final form is achieved. After Ikey's Day, there appears a fragment of plainsong which bears no relation to the rest of the music in the cycle, but which is recognizably similar to the In Nomine of John Taverner (fig 1). On the back of the same page, also turned upside down, there is some form of transposing scheme with the note names written out and separated by barlines and the notes themselves written a tone higher. e' flat becomes f'; b' flat becomes c'', etc. In some instances, the notes are written both a tone higher and a tone lower than the designated pitch. To the left are a series of proportions which may indicate that this material refers to a different work.

Stone Litany, for Mezzo-Soprano and Orchestra.

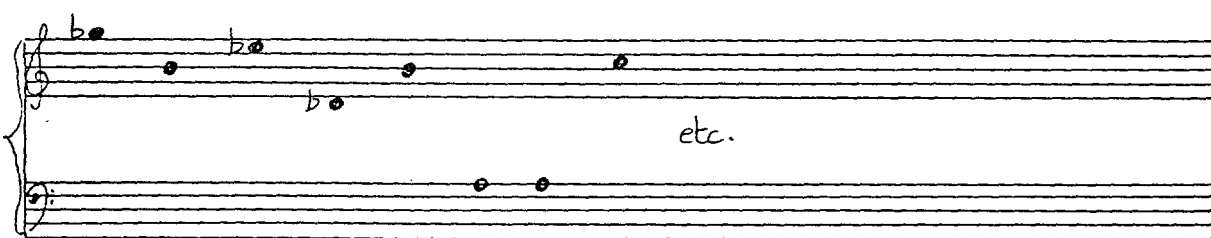
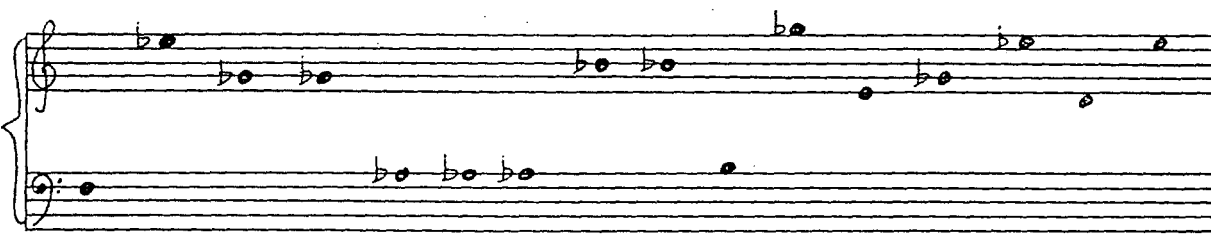
Stone Litany combines the exploration of Renaissance and Austro-German 'symphonic' forms with the depiction of the atmosphere surrounding the prehistoric burial tomb of Maeshowe, while setting the inscriptions carved on its walls by the Vikings. In the tomb, what Mackay Brown regards as the two most important cultural traditions of Orkney are juxtaposed. It reflects the pagan rituals of the ancient Celts - the first inhabitants of the islands - who had used

'magic squares', with their astronomical and astrological associations, as the basis of calculations enabling them to construct their monuments with remarkable precision.<sup>5</sup> The Vikings adapted the remnants of the Celtic rituals to the Christian beliefs which they had accepted after settling in the Orkney Islands as crofters/fishermen. The conflict between positive and negative forces, associated with good and evil, which affected their crops and was particularly fierce at the winter solstice, was ultimately determined by the Nativity with its promise, not only of seed time, but also of Resurrection. In his short story, Stone Poems, Mackay Brown freely interprets the Runic inscriptions, carved before the Norsemen embarked on Earl Rognvald's crusade. He invests them with Christian significance through the use of number symbolism (seven poets), and especially by interpreting 'the great treasure in the north-west', mentioned in the last inscription, as a reference to Magnus's burial place at Birsay, north-west of Maeshowe. Although Maxwell Davies's setting is based on the original Runes, Pete Owens's identification of his use of the Dies Irae and Victimae Paschali Laudes plainchants suggests that he has followed Mackay Brown's example.

Stone Litany reflects the contrast between Orcadian and European traditions. The vocal writing reproduces the stark outlines of the Runes, while the complex orchestral counterpoint 'mirrors' the intricate patterns of Celtic art.



Handwritten musical notation for a piano piece. The notation is written on a grand staff consisting of a treble clef and a bass clef. The treble staff contains several measures of music, including notes with flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat, D-flat) and a sharp (F-sharp). The bass staff contains a few notes, including a B-flat and an A-flat. The notation is written in a simple, handwritten style.



The conjunction of the plainsong fragments with the Runic alphabet, which forms the basis of the mezzo-soprano's opening obbligato sequence, can be cited as the first example of an overt connection between Christian and Nordic symbolism in Maxwell Davies's oeuvre. An important aspect of the sketches is the extent to which they are concerned with various kinds of vocal articulation in relation to the pronunciation of the Runic inscriptions and their influence on the choice of instrumental textures. The order of the sketches is not clearly established, but a group of pages is devoted to this question. The collection begins with a sequence of Runic symbols followed by a series of Norse words or monosyllables. Beneath these are two lines of pitch material, presumably the vocal part and its accompaniment, though there are no indications to this effect. There is also no suggestion of any harmonic or contrapuntal organization, and only a few markings concerning durational values. The vocal sounds on the first page include: 'Lo-oooooth (aaaaaaa) bro kra sy-ooo ne-ghae' etc. In some instances, there are single letters; in others, there are what appear to be complete words ('huather'). The pitch material is (fig 2).

Each pitch is associated with a vocal sound, and there are even sounds written over the rests, but there does not appear to be any relationship between particular notes and particular vocal utterances. There are five pages of similar

material, culminating in a sequence of eleven chords.

The only significant additional reference to the Runes is contained in some correspondence which tends to illustrate Maxwell Davies's changing attitude to his texts under Mackay Brown's influence. The trend whereby the music is directly related to the words in his Mackay Brown settings can be discerned in his discussion as to how the Runes are to be interpreted. The composer read the Runes individually, but then it was established that in at least one instance (related to the third song), they should be read in pairs, so that only half a sentence had been transcribed on some occasions. Moreover, the word believed to signify 'mighty' apparently means 'food'! (see the 'Makus the mighty' sequence).

The translation finally agreed indicates a greater diversity of texts than in the two preceding songs. They also relate to mysterious aspects of Viking life: 'Lothbrok's sons were bold men. Crusaders broke into Maeshowe. Lif, the Earl's cook, carved these Runes. Great treasure is hidden in the north-west.' An alternative (more literal) translation reads: 'Lothbrok's sons, doughty as they were, Jerusalem-farers broke open Ork How shelter-mound - this ill retreat still stands erect. Here, it is carved (recorded) was much fee (treasure) buried. Happy is he who may find that treasure. Oko (otho) Naekn was carried passed this How' (or: 'Oko was carried passed this How in the ship Naekn').

Stone Litany represents a transitional phase in Maxwell Davies's organization of his basic material, corresponding to a similar stage in his psychological development. Besides combining Renaissance and 'classical' concepts of the sonata, the alternation of vocal and ensemble passages looks back to such early works as O Magnum Mysterium, while the articulation of a largescale structure by means of tonal relationships foreshadows the symphonies. In addition to the use of 'canti firmi', elements of Medieval organum are woven into the essentially 'atonal' context. The evocation of the 'timeless' features of the Orkney environment in relation to its earliest settlers opened up a vast realm of mythology that was to be explored through Mackay Brown's writings. Furthermore, as he adopted a more detached approach to Christian themes, he was able to place greater emphasis on the 'symphonic' aspect of his style, stemming from the realization that 'abstract' forms containing allusions to 'classical' models were suited to conveying the power of the supernatural forces commemorated in such monuments as Maeshowe, and celebrated in the ancient rituals to which Mackay Brown constantly refers.

In his paper delivered to the Music Research Students Conference in 1984, Peter Owens outlined the transformation processes and levels of transposition employed in Stone Litany, tracing variants of the two plainsong fragments to

both thematic and harmonic aspects of the score. He described several devices used to modify the basic material for inclusion in the score, such as the creation of a series of 'tonal' relationships: C/F/A flat/B/E/B/A flat/F/C;<sup>6</sup> he also cited key passages where this material was most clearly deployed as the basis of a convincing argument that Stone Litany was based on sonata-form. However, many of the structural features which have preoccupied Maxwell Davies over many years have been retained. Two alternating strands of 'development' can be traced, with a certain amount of overlapping, in accordance with the majority of the composer's scores, where contrast is achieved either through the juxtaposition of vocal and instrumental writing, or by allowing a small ensemble to assert its identity in relation to a larger orchestra.

The orchestral 'prelude' and first song are both<sup>7</sup> introductory, in the sense that they present material which is to be 'developed' subsequently. Yet the song is also a 'development' of the 'prelude', since it combines features from the first transformation sequence, presented in complete form by the woodwind, with elements from the second transformation sequence not heard hitherto. In contrast to the chordal writing of the 'prelude', emphasis is placed on instrumental textures, partly in response to the Runic alphabet, but also as a practical solution to the problem of providing a suitable accompaniment for the voice. Owens's

paper was not concerned with the relationship of music and 'text'. Accordingly, the first five pages of the sketches were not pertinent to his discussion of Stone Litany, and his analysis of the work was based on the final score, rather than the order of the subsequent sketches.

On the other hand, after the initial experiments with vocal articulation, Maxwell Davies devotes the next three pages to song 3, with each page having two lines of vocal writing and a single line designated 'orchestra', though without any details of instrumentation. The vocal writing reflects the wide range of the singer's part with many notes of small value and a good deal of repetition. By contrast, the orchestral line is based on pitches of extended duration forming a slowly-moving 'cantus firmus'. In the accompaniment this is clearly audible in the upper woodwind where organum is used, usually at the interval of a fifth. In song 4, on the following page, what Peter Owens calls the Max the Mighty theme appears in recognizably the same form as in the score, but without any suggestion of an accompaniment. It is succeeded on the subsequent pages by the orchestral introduction and song 1, and the orchestral transition and song 2, though the orchestral detail is not stated in either case. However, the vocal line is clearly identifiable from the score. With the exception of the 'Max the Mighty' theme, on which Owens bestows a good deal of attention, the vocal lines do not seem to be directly related

to the transformation processes.

One of the features of these sketches is that the vocal writing remains consistent in all four songs, and where the orchestral material is written, even if only a single line, its character remains the same for each of the transitional passages. Accordingly, although the vocal and orchestral material are again combined in the second orchestral passage, they can clearly be heard as an extension of the 'prelude', rather than the song. The various orchestral groups return as distinctive entities, their chordal material having been transformed into a four-part canon for brass, woodwind, marimba and strings, and given rhythmic definition by means of durational values associated with the different intervals. The first two 'voices' present the canon in its original version, the remaining two in retrograde. Embellishments are introduced by assigning additional instruments to each 'voice' - harp, celeste, glockenspiel and bells, respectively. The ensuing vocal episode expands the first song in similar fashion, as befits the fact that a complete text is involved: 'Ingibjorg the fair widow. Many a proud woman bowed her head as she walked in here, no matter how proud a lady she was.' The use of strings as a background for the setting of these words introduces a new textual element into the sequence of songs while the brass chords accompanying the unpitched declamation of the signature, 'Aerlinger', indicate the underlying similarity of the

different groups of material in that they retrace in more dramatic form the sequence of chords previously allotted to the strings. The brass also function as a 'bridge passage' to the next orchestral section, and by this stage, various interpretations of the work's structure suggest themselves. Peter Owens regards the four-part canon, or 'first orchestral sonata', plus the second song as an 'exposition', and the 'second orchestral sonata', plus the third song as the 'development'. His contention is that the 'second sonata' elaborates all the thematic and harmonic ideas so far presented by re-ordering the pitches, and consequently the intervallic relationships with their associated durational ratios, of the first two transformation sequences. Much of the material is thus heard in unfamiliar guise, including the clearest rendering of the second transformation of the 'cantus firmus' for clarinets supported by trombones. The first violins have three re-statements of other transformations which have been continually evolving throughout the piece, but whose principal manifestation has occurred as the basis of the four-part canon. The remaining elements of the discourse were also drawn from earlier in the work, yet even allowing for the fact that they are freely deployed, the character of the music is sufficiently different from anything that has preceded it for this passage to be regarded as a 'scherzo', based on the composer's *allegro molto* indication. Similarly, in the third song, the composer conflates two inscriptions to create the longest



episode in the work - analogous to a 'slow movement'. This constitutes the only appearance of the third transformation sequence and its complexity is in accordance with the suggestion that it represents 'the greatest development of the original transformation sequence'.<sup>8</sup> This claim is supported by the observation that the 'cantus firmus', in conjunction with the embellishments, is doubled not only at the octave, but also at the fourth and major seventh - inversions of the fifth and minor second, the work's primary intervals.

Nevertheless, while the third song is the most substantial of the vocal passages, it lacks the necessary dramatic impact, when compared with the 'second orchestral sonata', to function as the culmination of the entire 'development', and this is emphasized by the extent to which the two halves of the 'development' begin to assert their individual identity as separate 'movements' within the overall structure. In addition, other ambiguities begin to arise. Peter Owens's analysis is heavily dependent on the music associated with the 'signature' which the composer appends to the score as the final vocal setting: 'Makus (Max) the mighty carved these Runes'. He states that the voice part is formed from the last three lines of the first 'transformation sequence' in combination with the first three lines of the second 'sequence'. This is traced back to the first vocal entry, where it is presented in mirror form: the first three lines

of the first 'transformation sequence' being combined with the last three lines of the second. It then forms the basis of the four-part canon and is subsequently repeated when this material recurs on first violins in the 'second orchestral sonata'. Since it does not appear at the culmination of the 'development', however, its function during this part of the work is somewhat limited. Moreover, while it provides the basis of the two-part canon in the orchestral postlude (classified by Owens as a 'recapitulation'), in conjunction with harmonies originally presented in the second song, it is still in a state of evolution. Further ambiguity arises from Maxwell Davies's allusions to both 'classical' sonata-form, based on tonal relationships, as well as its 'romantic' counterpart, involving continually transforming material, and then there is the possibility that Stone Litany can be interpreted as a series of double variations, especially as the composer has employed this form in a number of subsequent works. Variations can be based on a theme which defines the 'field' to be explored subsequently, or they can determine the scope of the work so the theme is not fully stated until the culmination is reached. The process is essentially 'developmental', and Stone Litany belongs to this category in that the interlocking cycles of orchestral and vocal music both define the work's internal space, enabling the 'theme' to be presented as the composer's 'signature'.

Another formal possibility which would fit both sonata-form

and variation form interpretations stems from the fact that Maeshowe forms an integral part of a larger and more complex structure involving a series of standing stones. In one sense, its relationship to the standing stones is not unlike that of a 'theme' to a set of variations, but the prehistoric civilization responsible for such monuments was also known to have used the 'golden section' as an organizational principle. Maxwell Davies has stated that Stone Litany was influenced by Debussy and Sibelius, both of whom used this formula as a structural device, and Roy Howat has pointed out that Maxwell Davies has mentioned 'Dallapiccola as one of various composers with whom he has discussed proportional and other hidden techniques in music of the past'.<sup>9</sup> Whether a detailed analysis of rational characteristics would show that Maxwell Davies has emulated them is unclear, but circumstantial evidence tends to indicate that this might be the case. The association of particular intervals with specific duration ratios conforms to the early stages of the Fibonacci series: minor seconds -  $1/1$ ; major seconds -  $1/2$ ; minor thirds -  $1/3$ ; major thirds -  $2/3$ . At this point, the sequence breaks down, but it may not be totally insignificant given that the third song stands out as the most likely moment at which the 'golden section' is reached. Besides the fact that it introduces the final element of the work's basic material, the two remaining sections contribute roughly a quarter of the score's total time-span in accordance with the proportions of the formula. Moreover, several subsequent

works have conformed to a similar structural outline. Although Stone Litany is generally considered to be in eight sections, the nine divisions of its transformation grid establish links with Ave Maris Stella, Westerlings and First Ferry to Hoy, all of which are divided relatively unambiguously into nine sections. Stone Litany and Westerlings correspond in that the music reaches its greatest complexity in their respective third songs (Section 6 in both cases), and, as Stephen Pruslin has pointed out, if Ave Maris Stella is interpreted as a 'sonata allegro', Movements 6 and 7 function as the 'fulcrum' of the work.<sup>10</sup> Finally, the appearance of the whales in First Ferry to Hoy is depicted in Sections 5/7 of the score, all of which suggests that even if the 'golden section' is not used rigorously, these works are connected by basic structural principles.

Other echoes of Stone Litany have appeared in many subsequent works, so that there is some justification for regarding it not simply as a transitional score, but as a catalyst of the composer's development throughout the 'Orkney' period. It is typical of Maxwell Davies that in abandoning the 'expressionistt' style which had influenced his previous settings of English texts, he should concentrate on an early Orkney dialect before embarking on the majority of his Mackay Brown settings. A certain symbolic value can be attached to the fact that the first 'Song' is concerned with the Runic alphabet, especially as, even in the sketches, it is prefaced

with the remark: 'Should sound like the very birth of speech, of the power to speak'. It is worth noting that Harrison Birtwistle was exploring a similar idea in the opening scene of The Mask of Orpheus, which he began composing in 1973, and it would be surprising if Maxwell Davies was not already familiar with some of the opera's satellite works: Nenia: The Death of Orpheus (1970), The Fields of Sorrow (1971), together with Meridian (1970/71) and La Plage (1972). On the other hand, in view of the extent to which Stone Litany prefigured the First Symphony, it should be stressed that Birtwistle did not embark on a symphonic career subsequently, and that of Maxwell Davies's contemporaries, only Alexander Goehr, with his Little Symphony (1963) and Symphony in One Movement (1969/70) had already done so. Moreover, the work evinces a similar change of emphasis as regards the music, for besides heralding a gradual simplification of technique, it marks a decisive stage in the composer's exploration of late 18th-century 'classicism', based primarily on tonal relationships. Although 'transformation processes' have remained fundamental to Maxwell Davies's compositional method, 'classical' models have become increasingly pervasive, culminating in the Strathclyde Concerti on which he is currently working.

The opening of Westerlings recalls Stone Litany in the way that the word 'Oarsmen' emerges from an undefined phonetic context, rather in the manner of 'the birth of

speech', and the setting of the Norn Pater Noster fulfils a similar role to the 'Max the Mighty' 'signature' in the earlier work. The sketches for both scores also show that the composer tended to have greater difficulty with the music for the 'seascapes', or 'transitions' than with that directly linked to the texts. However, as the sketches demonstrate, the influence of Stone Litany is even more significant in respect of the Second Symphony, where elements of its transformational scheme recur in conjunction with material adumbrated in Black Pentecost.

#### Black Pentecost.

This title was originally appended to a large single movement which was ultimately subsumed into the First Symphony. It was taken from George Mackay Brown's poem, Dead Fires (Fishermen with Ploughs), set by Maxwell Davies as the second half of his song-cycle, Dark Angels (1974). A commission from the London Symphony Orchestra coincided with a campaign to prevent uranium mining in the Orkneys (which also inspired the composition of The Yellow Cake Revue), and the composer gave the title, Black Pentecost to the resulting work, written during the summer of 1978, when the protest reached its height, incorporating a text from Mackay Brown's novel, Greenvoe, describing the destruction of an island in similar circumstances. However, the work was not performed until

Fig. 3.



Fig. 4.



1982 (New Philharmonia Orchestra), by which time the Second Symphony had been completed.

A notable feature of Black Pentecost is that it combines Maxwell Davies's symphonic preoccupations with a dramatization of the kind of events that uranium mining would have entailed, though the preliminary sketches give little indication of the composer's approach to the text. The only important exception is a black star which is drawn at the head of the first page and which is reproduced on some of the subsequent sketches in reference to the opening words of the text: 'Black Star, Operation Black Star was how they described it.' The symbolic significance of the choice of the 'magic squares' of the Sun and of Venus, based, respectively, on the Numbers 6 and 7, cannot be discounted, but their initial presentation on the first page of the sketches is devoid of comment and comprised only one facet of the pre-compositional material with which the composer was working at this stage.


Following the emblem, Page 1 begins with a fourteen-note pitch-set with lines drawn between the notes which are repeated - G sharp and D - emphasizing their tritone relationship (fig 3).

This series is then repeated but divided into three bars, and immediately below is a further series (fig 4).



[illegible]

No. 10:

[illegible][illegible]

The C sharp is underlined and the tritone has two circles around it. Then follows a chromatic scale commencing on c' and numbered 1 to 12. There are two dashes under No. 9 (g' sharp) and also No. 10 (a'). Next, there is a Runic symbol, a 0 in a circle and a 2 in a diamond, and on a single stave there is a seven-note sequence marked 1-1, 1-2, etc. (fig. 5).

These are the same as the first seven notes of the sixteen-note sequence outlined above. The figure 2 signifies that this sequence begins on the second note of the numbered chromatic scale, and there follow further transpositions (fig 6).

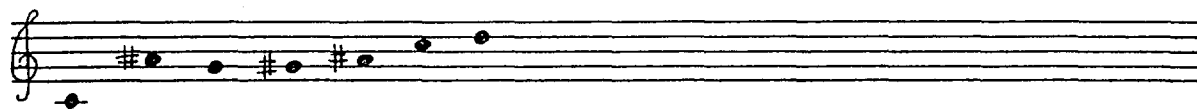
These transpositions are all based on pitches 1/7 of the 16-note series, and are also marked in accordance with another numbering system, namely, 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

In addition to this second number system, there is a third, above the notes. This begins on the third line, marked '2', which has Nos. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 above it, and continues as follows:-

Line 4 - 13/18;

Line 5 - 19/24;

Fig. 7.



Line 6 - 25/30;

Line 7 - 31/36.

In these instances, the first note is always omitted.

Ultimately, it is one of three numerical systems which influence this sequence. The first is numbered 1/6 in red, without dashes. The second line also starts with No. 1, but underneath is added 1-; this is a pencil numbering system which starts with 1 instead of 0, and always includes the first note. Then there is the diamond numbering system which has the following order for each transposition:

2, 12, 9, 10, 11, 1, 3.

From this it is clear that 1, beginning on c', has not been represented in the transposition series, but should have appeared in the penultimate sequence instead of the second version of 12, beginning on b'. Thus the sequence marked '5' can be correctly rendered: (fig 7).

To the right is another series of transpositions starting, respectively, on Nos. 9, 7, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10. These are all based on pitches 8/14 of the 16-note series, and the transposition numbered as 9 is at the same pitch level as

Fig 8.

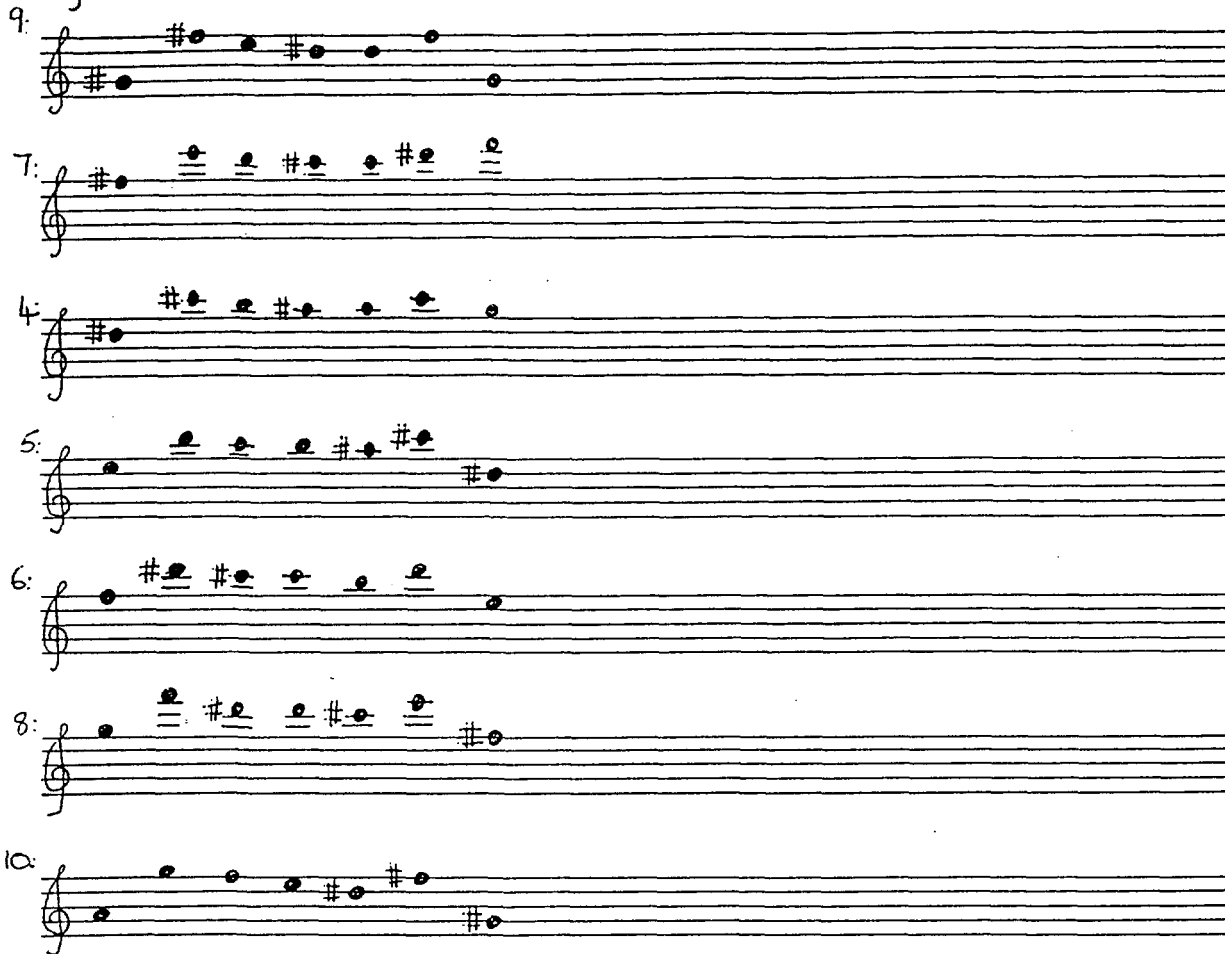
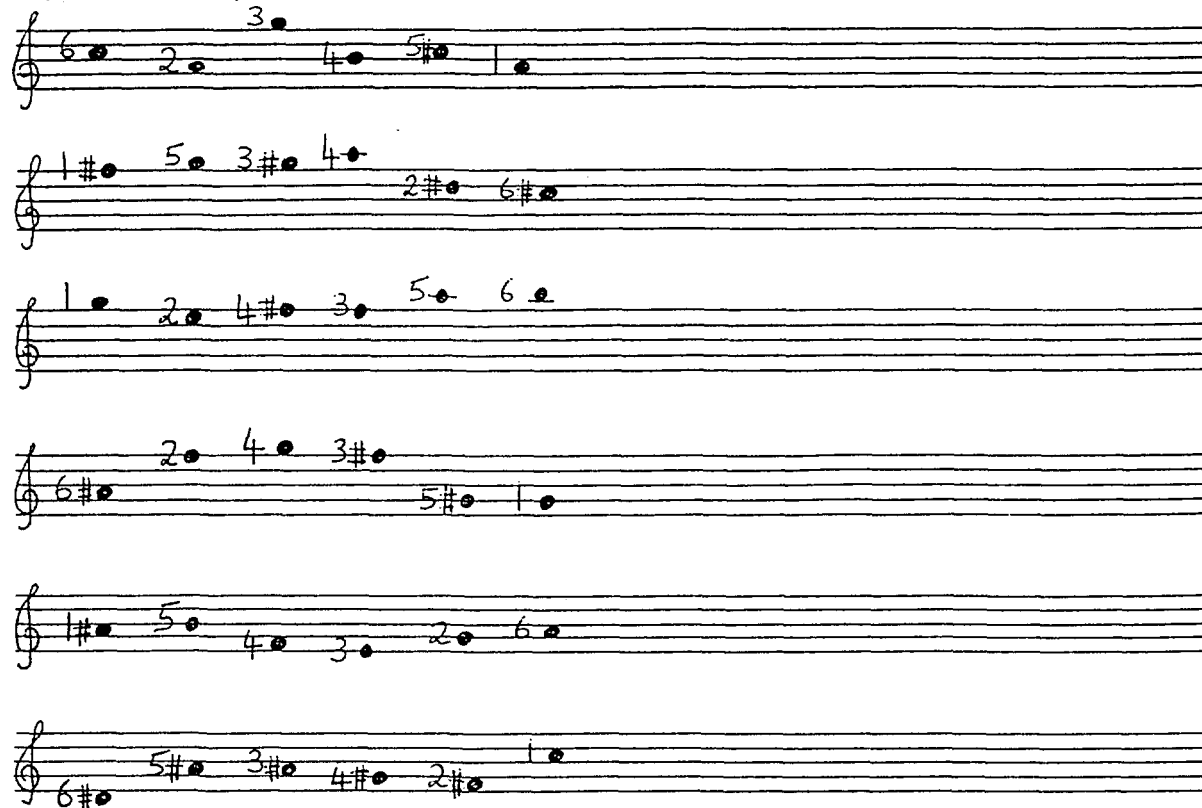


Fig. 9: Magic square 1

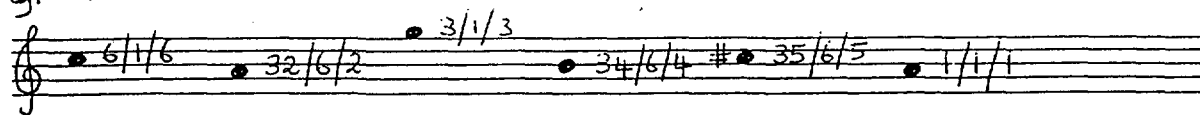


notes 8/14: g' sharp f'' sharp e'', etc. Moreover, Pitches 8/14 are a retrograde version of notes 1/7, but transposed up a perfect fifth. The entire sequence reads thus (fig. 8):

Transposition sequences 1, 2, 3, 11 and 12 are missing, while the two appearing in both series - 9 and 10 - are related, even though only the first two pitches of each in each case are identical. The third and fourth pitches are reversed; the fifth and seventh pitches are different; the fifth pitch of the first series becomes the sixth in the second. These similarities explain the close links which generally characterize the thematic material in Maxwell Davies's scores as well as his ability to transform one fragment of pre-existing material (usually plainsong) into another. They also demonstrate that his preoccupation with manipulative counterpoint goes back to the earliest phase of the compositional process.

There follows the first of the two 'magic squares', in this instance, a 6 x 6 'square', to the left of which are the letters L, X, Q, H (the L and Q with inverted accents above them), possibly a No. 7, and a Runic symbol. To the right is a figure 21 in a diamond, which also includes a cross with arrows pointing outwards in all directions. The numbers of the 'square' are written in red, the notes are presented without durational values (fig. 9: 'Magic square' 1).

Fig. 10.



The pitches in this 'square' do not appear to relate to the earlier material in any obvious way, and their arrangement reflects neither a rotational scheme, nor a pattern of intervallic relationships. However, in a more comprehensive version of the 'square', the numbers determine rhythmic values in a precise manner. Based on a quaver unit, they represent, respectively, quaver, crotchet, dotted crotchet, minim, dotted crotchet tied to a crotchet, dotted minim, and thus constitute an elementary durational scheme. This scheme is used in conjunction with the pitches, which unfold, line by line, as the 'theme' announced by the violins after the introduction. The only additional factor is that the odd-numbered lines are read from left to right, while the even-numbered lines are read from right to left. In the complete 'square', the first number is the legacy of an earlier stage, where the numbers 1/36 were grouped into six lines - 1/6, 7/12, etc.; the second figure denotes the line on which the number appeared in the original arrangement; the final number represents the result of subtracting multiples of 6 from the first number until single figures are obtained. The top line can serve as an example of these procedures in operation (fig. 10).

Diagonals are drawn across the 'square', first from top left-hand to bottom right-hand, then from second top left to second from bottom right. The result is a complete network



Fig. 11.

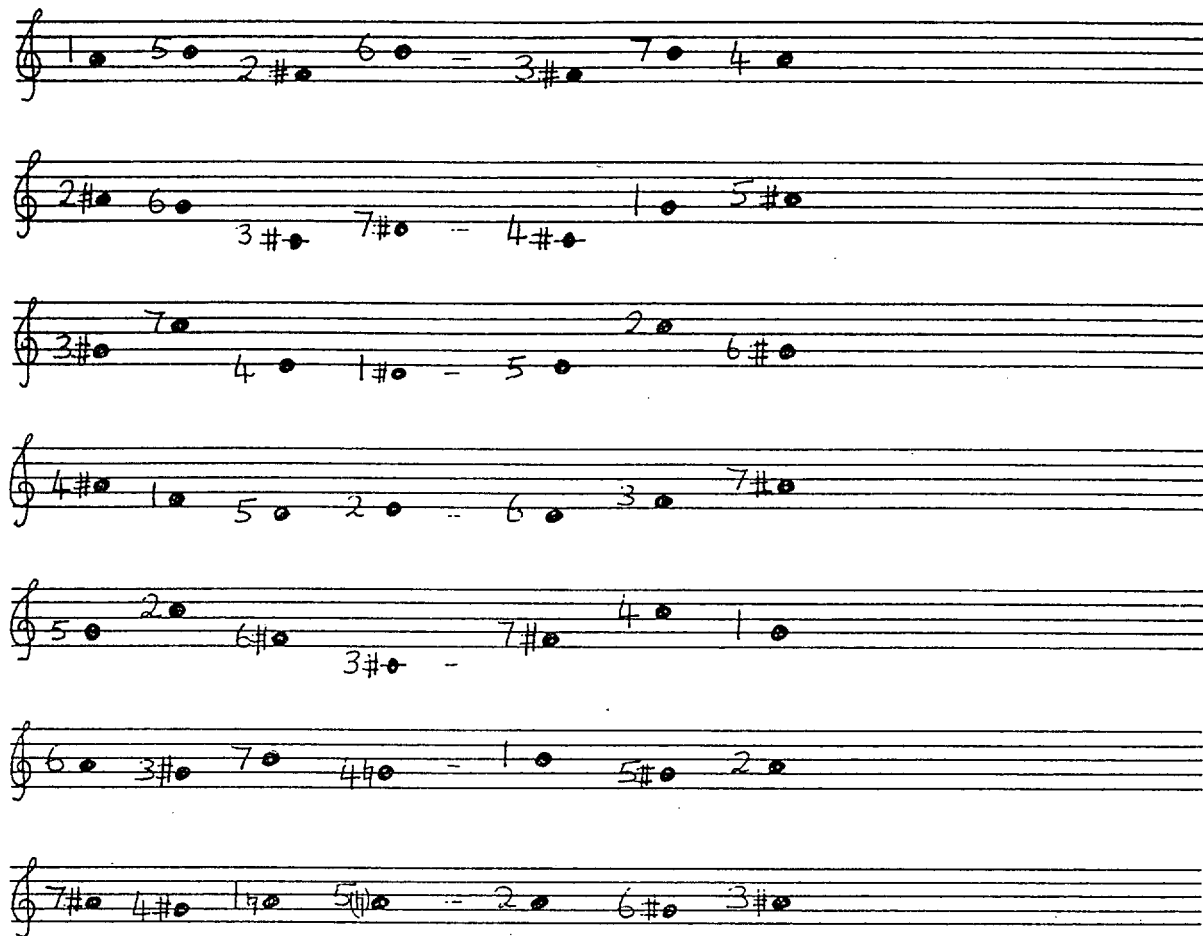
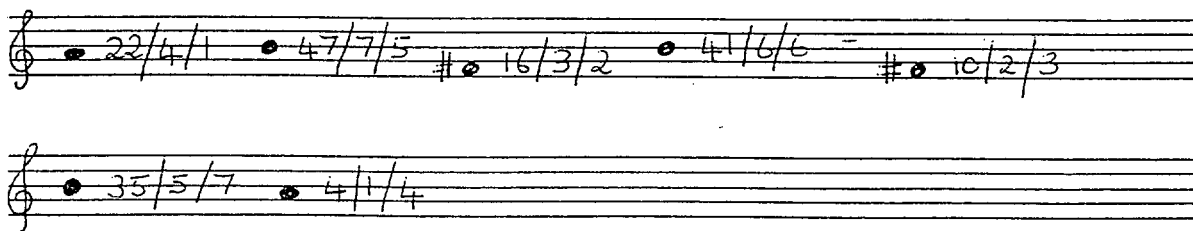


Fig. 12.



of lines drawn through the notes.

Further to the right is a 7 x 7 'square': 'the 'magic square' of Venus'. In many circumstances, 7 x 7 'squares' exhibit unusually symmetrical properties, and in order to counter this, the composer has made a few minor adjustments, such as transposing the final two numbers of the first line, or placing the last number of the second line at the start. He has also divided the 'square' by marking the first fourth-sevenths, working from left to right, in red pencil, and drawing a line between this and the remaining three-sevenths. Nevertheless, the symmetrical character of the 'square' is still apparent. (fig. 11: 'Magic Square' 2 - Dashes indicate the division in the original square).

In the complete 'square', the durational scheme and the numerical arrangement are the same as in the 6 x 6 'square', but with the addition of a figure 7, denoting a minim tied to a dotted crotchet, and, of course, the overall scheme is based on multiples of 7, that is, Nos. 1/49. Again, the top line shows how the 'square' is constructed (fig. 12).

In view of the importance of tritone relationships in Maxwell Davies's music, an interesting feature is that they are more evenly distributed in the 6 x 6 'square', where three in lines 2, 5 and 6, respectively, as opposed to the 7 x 7

Fig. 13.



Fig. 14.

Minus 1:

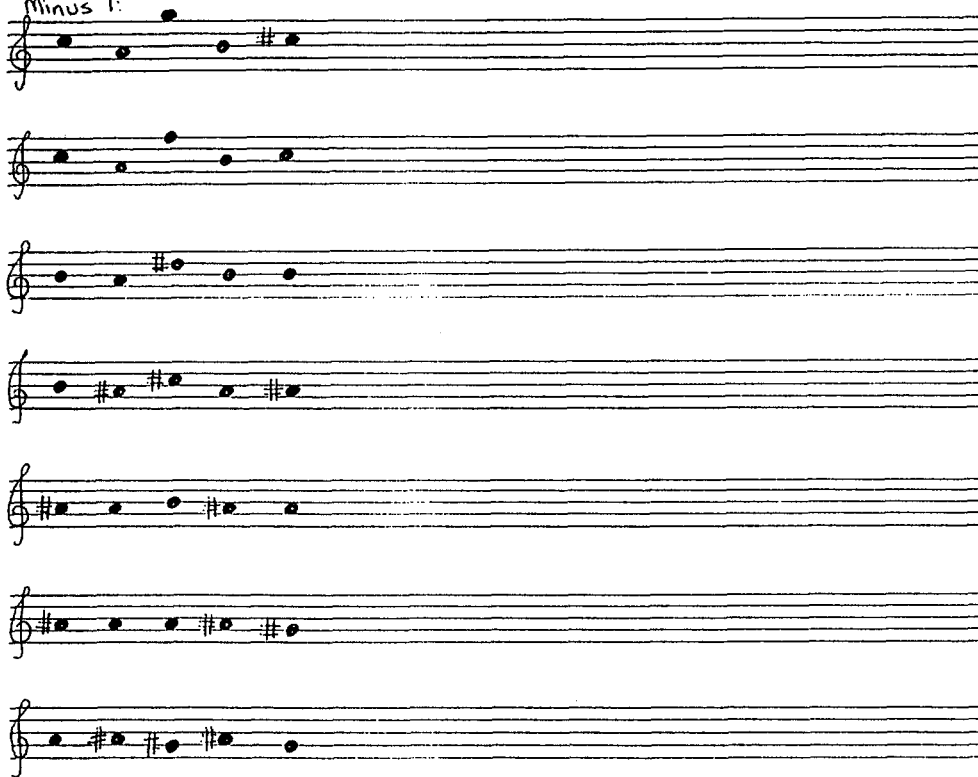
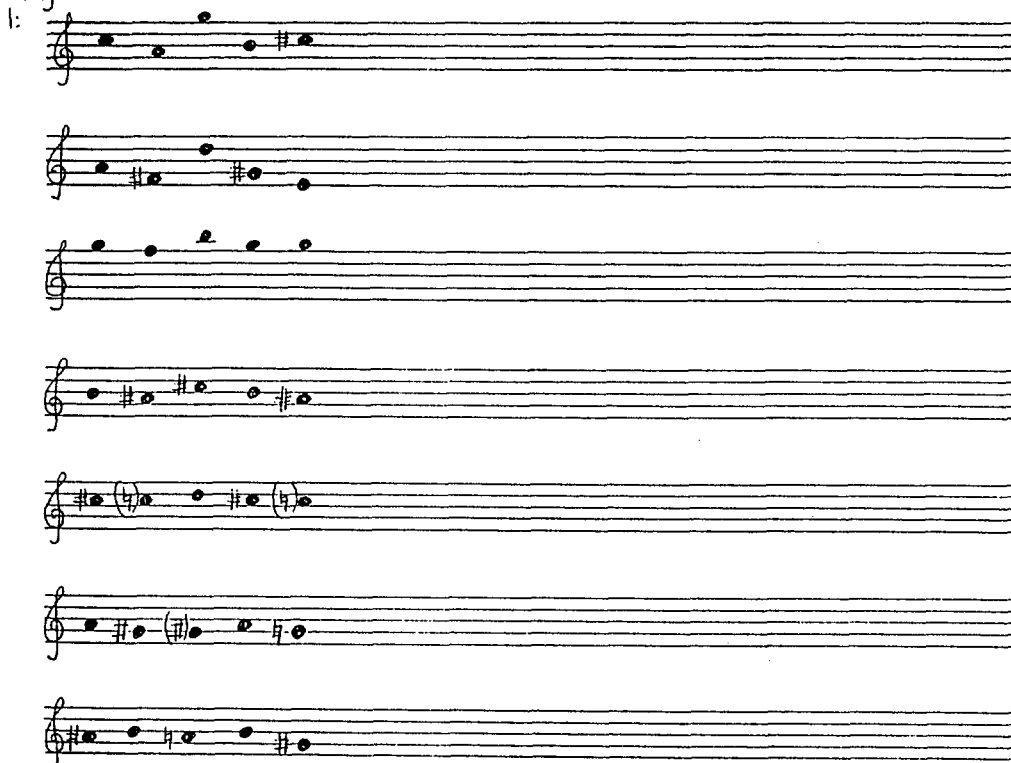


Fig. 15.



'square', where there are four in line 1, two in line 2, and two in line 5. These will later have a bearing on the harmony.

The page is completed by a fourteen-note pitch 'set' which refers to the transposition sequences based on the chromatic numbering system. The pitches are taken alternatively from the two halves of the 16-note series, so that if the original 'set' had been numbered 1/16, the new 14-note sequence would correspond to Nos. 1, 8, 2, 9, 3, 11, 4, 10, 5 (transposed up an octave), 13, 6, 16, 7, 4. The series reproduced by Maxwell Davies reads (fig 13: the figures in brackets indicate repeated notes).

Page 2 of the sketches comprises two sequences, each of seven lines of five notes placed under each other. One sequence is marked minus 1, the other is marked 1, and in lines 1 and 4, the pitches are identical. (fig. 14: Minus 1). (fig. 15: 1)

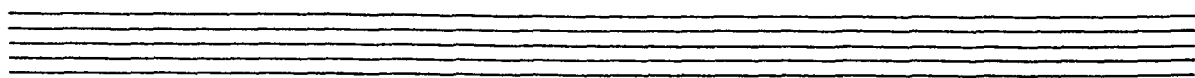
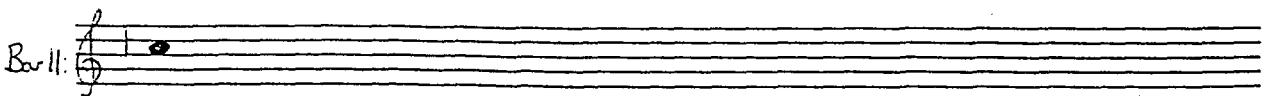
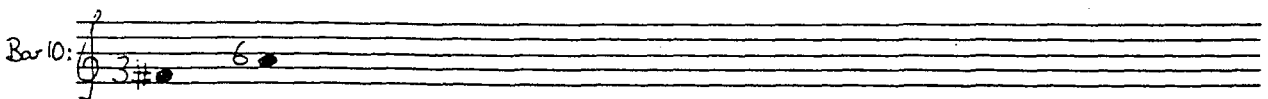
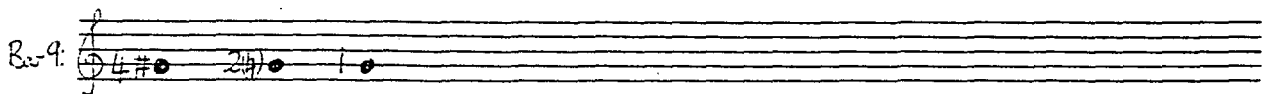
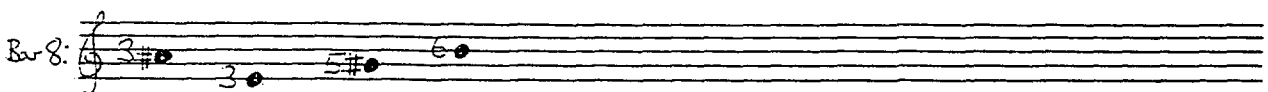
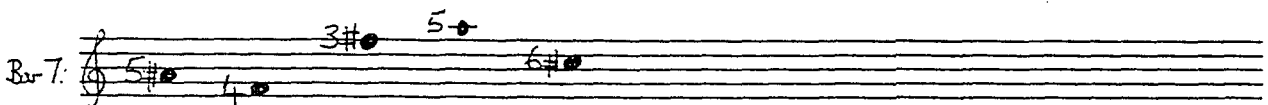
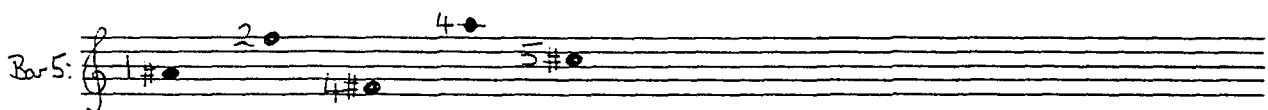
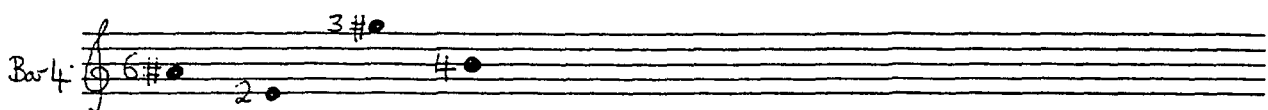
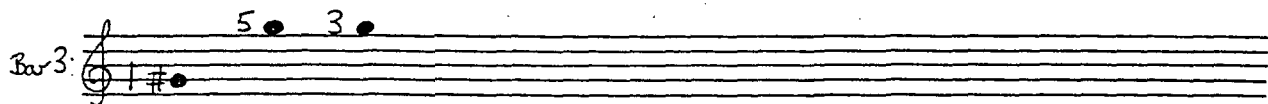
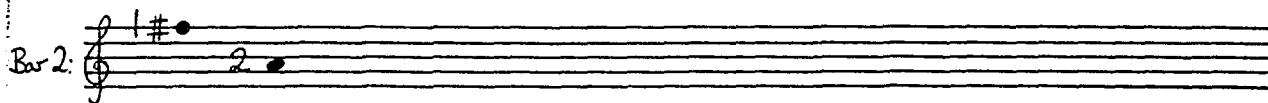
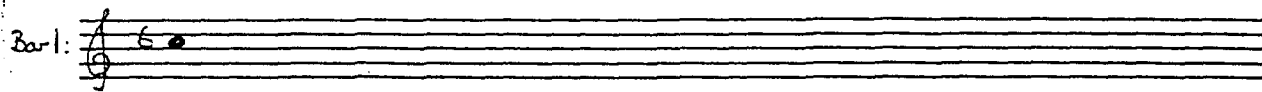
The pitches in the sequence marked 1 are given rhythmic values - quavers, dotted quavers, or crotchets - whereas those in the Minus 1 sequence contain no rhythmic indications. These sequences clearly represent the first attempt at combining the two 'squares'. The first line of each is derived from the 6 x 6 'square'; the next two lines of the '1' sequence have more in common with the 7 x 7

'square' on account of their symmetrical arrangement in which the third note has a pivotal function, emphasized by the fact that it belongs to a tritone in both cases. By line 4, both sequences are being derived primarily from the 7 x 7 'square', and by the final line, the Minus 1 sequence is similar to its opening line. There is some evidence that this technique is indebted to the compositional method employed in Stone Litany, where a transformation grid was constructed from the partitioning of a pitch 'set' into three segments, generally enabling the intervallic contour of one of the segments to expand, line by line, while the contour of a second segment tended to contract, and that of the third segment remained constant. In the 'Minus 1' sequence, the first pitch descends by a semitone after it has been heard twice; the third pitch descends by a tone with each entry; and the fifth pitch descends by a semitone on successive appearances.

The remainder of the page has been crossed out, but some of it is still visible: a fourteen-note 'set' beginning with the top line of the 6 x 6 'square', and thus the initial six pitches of the theme for violins mentioned earlier.

Page 3 of the sketches begins with two sequences of chords arranged one above the other. The top line has seven chords repeated six times, the bottom line has six chords repeated seven times, by which time they are again synchronized. The

Fig. 16.



chords are abstractions of the two 'squares', omitting the repeated notes. Thus the chords in the top line derived from the 7 x 7 'square' have fewer notes than their counterparts. They adhere to the order of the original 'squares', so that the first chord is drawn from line 1, etc. Nevertheless, there are one or two minor amendments. The third chord in the lower line omits the G of the original and substitutes G sharp. In the fourth chord of the upper line, the E is omitted. In the fifth chord of the lower line, the A is absent. The same formula is repeated on the lower half of the page, but this time the chords are spread over several octaves (though mainly in the treble register), and there are a few changes to the internal structure of some of the chords. In some instances, these are very minor, such as writing E instead of F flat, though on this occasion, Maxwell Davies divides the chords into groups of three by means of a green line.

The remaining pages increasingly have the appearance of a manuscript score, except that after several pages, the composer repeats the 6 x 6 'square' in its original form, including numbers and pitches. On the following page, the numerical system is reproduced again, and is applied to the durational values of the pitches in the manner already outlined, but this time the pitches are different and the groups are separated by barlines, though without time signatures (fig. 16).

Fig. 17.

Bar 1:

Bar 2:

Bar 3:

Bar 4:

Bar 5:

Bar 6:

Bar 7:

Bar 8:

Bar 9:

Bar 10:

Bar 11:

Bar 12:

Bar 13:

Bar 14:

Fig. 18.

Bar 1:

Bar 2:

Bar 3:

Bar 4:

Bar 5:

Bar 6:

Bar 7:

Bar 8:

Bar 9:

Bar 10:

Bar 11:

Bar 12:

Bar 13:

Bar 14:



Various symmetrical elements can be discerned within these bars, not least the fact that the sequence begins with a dotted minim bar and ends with a quaver bar, but the most significant factor is that this material is all derived from the 6 x 6 'square'. Accordingly, the formula recurs in conjunction with the 7 x 7 'square' (fig. 17).

A notable feature of this arrangement is that the original 'square' is reproduced, including the division after the first four-sevenths of each line, but the order of the lines is changed so that Bars 1/2 restate line 1, Bars 3/4 restate line 3, 5/6 - line 5, 7/8 - line 7, 9/10 - line 2, 11/12 - line 4, 13/14 - line 6. The same numerical sequence, together with the appropriate durational scheme, is retained, with each rhythmic denomination being allotted its own colour pencil. However, the pitches are altered, though without changing the symmetrical characteristics of the 'square' (fig. 18).

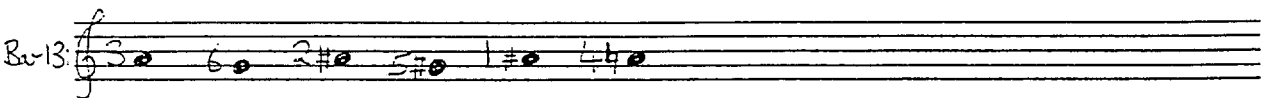
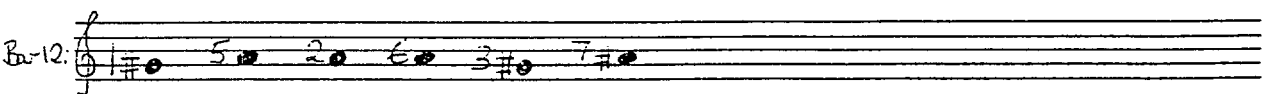
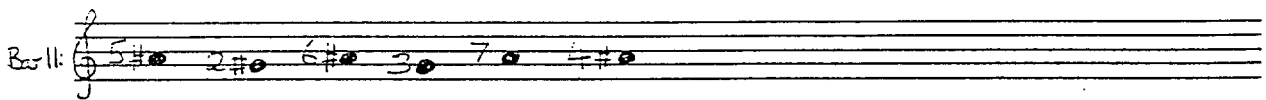
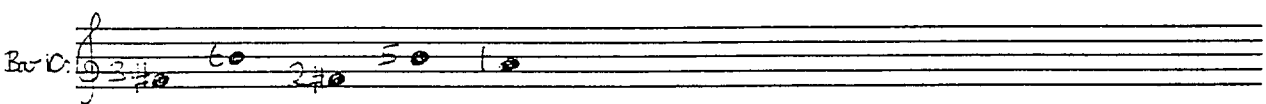
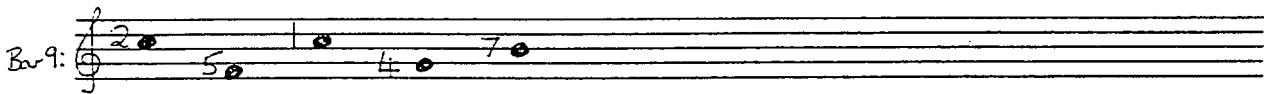
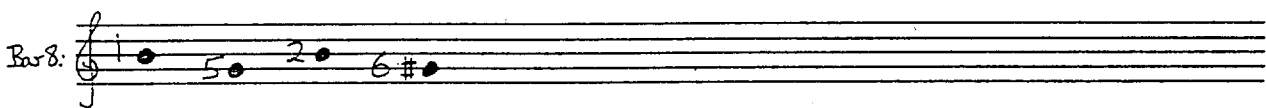
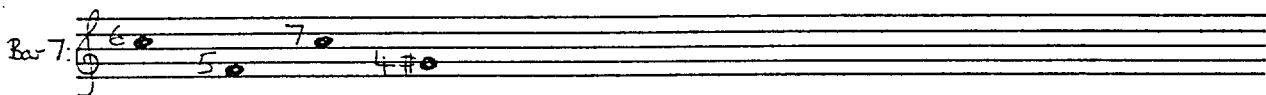
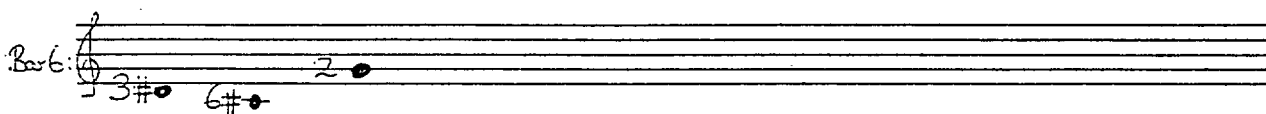
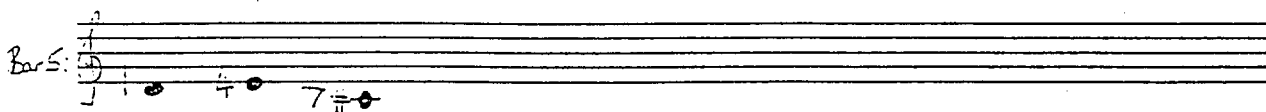
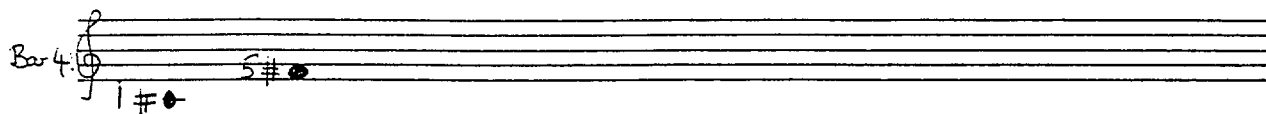
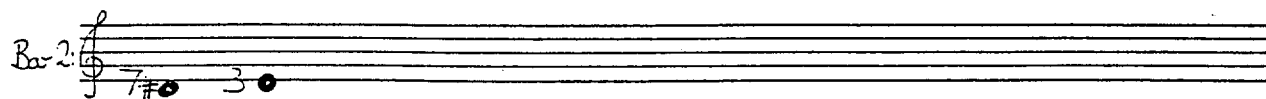
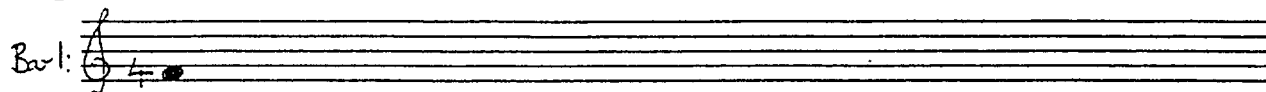
On the next page, the chord sequences recur, though more closely woven together. Alongside is a passage for strings, though there does not appear to be any obvious connection between the two. After further pages of score, the eleven-bar sequence reproduced from the 6 x 6 'square' is repeated in conjunction with chords derived from these bars. Underneath Bar 2, the a' and f'' sharp are combined. In bar

3, g'' recurs as G in the bass clef. The pitches for Bar 4 also recur in the bass, except that the g' sharp is written A flat. Bar 5 (bass clef): b flat c flat A F G' flat. This proceeds for a further six bars but is not associated with any numerical system apart from the fact that there are the following numbers: 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

Another eleven-bar sequence follows, with the repeated notes circled.

After several more pages of detailed instrumentation, including time signatures, we arrive at the start of a new section in which Maxwell Davies concentrates on woodwind and brass. This includes a tempo indication: crotchet equals 160, minim equals 80, and a time signature is either 4/4 or 2/2. However, the unusual feature of this is that the beats in each bar are marked four to a bar until he reaches 100 after 25 bars, whereupon he repeats the process, though this time he leaves it incomplete at the end of Page 26 of the sketches. This is near the end of the first movement, because these pages overlap with the beginning of the second, signified by the fact that they are also numbered 1 in two cases. Incidentally, although this is not shown in the sketches, the movement concludes with a fortissimo rendering of the complete 6 x 6 'square', reading all six lines from left to right, on trumpets, doubled by horns for the last two lines. Pages 23/25 are also numbered 1/3, and Page 26 is

Fig. 19.



again numbered 1. On the first of these pages, the text is introduced, and it is possible to see the composer amending Mackay Brown's original by omitting words and phrases. Before this, however, the duration scheme is re-written in conjunction with another arrangement of pitches (fig. 19).

The various note repetitions indicate that the material has been derived from the 7 x 7 'square', though in an unsystematic manner not unlike the eleven-bar sequence drawn from the 6 x 6 'square' (see above). Nevertheless, the 6 x 6 'square' remains prominent at the start of the second movement. Although not explicitly shown in the sketches, the strings play a variant of the first four pitches: c'' a' d'' b', while the oboe plays the first line in long notes before deriving other pitches from it in a more random fashion. The remaining pages (24/52) contain various pitch sequences, sometimes grouped into bars, frequently highlighted by the use of different coloured crayons, or written independently of the rest of the music. Some of these sequences are associated with different extracts of the text, and many of them comprise sustained pitches, possibly representing some kind of 'cantus firmus'. Some of the notes are circled, and are arrowed to equivalent pitches in the main body of the music. Circled notes can also indicate a direct relationship with one of the 'magic squares'. Although the pages are numbered chronologically, they also contain a second numbering system, which returns to 1 at the beginning of a

new movement or section. For example, one of the pages includes a star at the top with a figure showing that it marks the beginning of the third movement.

At the climax of the work (page 48, also numbered 6), both the phrases of text and the accompanying music are numbered:

1. 'I am from Black Star.'
2. 'I am the boss.'
3. 'Much money has been spent . . . through the Bu (the name of an old farm).'
4. 'Very technical, great secrecy.'
5. 'Black Star is necessary . . . out of my hands.'

This passage is not laid out like a score; Nos. 1 to 4 are written over to the left of the page, and No. 5 to the right. The passage to be sung falsetto is marked 'wheedling'.

The final three pages are written out in full score, with the addition of a few isolated notes. This is symptomatic of the fact that as the work proceeds, Maxwell Davies has less need of the sketches. In fact, as the foregoing material attempts to show, following the precompositional material, the subsequent sketches for Black Pentecost are unsystematic, as compared with the works discussed in David Roberts's thesis, or even the Second Symphony (see below). Moreover, whereas, in the symphony, the sketch material

switches unpredictably from one movement to another, and does not necessarily start with the first movement, in Black Pentecost, especially those pages associated with the text, the sketches show that the composition unfolded chronologically. This implies that in his Mackay Brown settings, the text functions, to some extent, as the equivalent of a 'magic square', helping to determine the work's overall structure, and additional confirmation is provided by the fact that other works involving texts generally have less pre-compositional material, or are based on existing schemes which have already been used in some form in non-vocal scores.

Nevertheless, even in a work such as the Second Symphony, where the sketches indicate a good deal of pre-compositional planning, it is possible to detect an underlying simplicity to the overall scheme in accordance with the quest for stylistic integration initiated by Stone Litany, and developed in the composer's subsequent works associated with Mackay Brown texts.

#### Symphony No 2.

Direct links between the Second Symphony and the writings of George Mackay Brown are undeniably tenuous, in that the composer regards the work as a further development of Black Pentecost, where he had attempted to create a

'transformation process' which would be capable of underpinning both the 'symphonic' opening movement, and the subsequent dramatization of extracts from Mackay Brown's novel, Greenvoe, describing the destruction of an island by industrial technology. Nevertheless, there is strong evidence that the symphony represents a further stage in the identification with the Orkney environment and its community, which had originally stemmed from a close involvement with Mackay Brown's writings. This is concerned with the composer's transformation of a personal observation into the basic metaphor of the symphony, in much the same way as Mackay Brown attaches symbolic value to apparently insignificant items of 'realistic' detail, and relates to a reference on Page 4 of the preliminary sketches to Leonardo's drawings, as well as Andre Gide, with regard to different wave formations. When discussing the work, he described these as follows:-

' . . . This particular work . . . stems from a perception . . . that there are two kinds of wave. In the first the water content of the wave remains static while the form goes through it; for instance, when you look out from my window at the bay, there are wave shapes on it, but if you look at an object, a piece of wood, or whatever, it just remains stationary. Then there is the other sort, like you see when you go past the blockship on the way to Hoy on Stevie's ferry, where the tide goes through and the water at the side

makes a shape like ringlets, which remains constant while the water is whizzing through: then the form is constant but the content is changing rapidly.

'I just started by writing two very different kinds of music, one where the content remains exactly the same and the form is changing, and the other where the form remains absolutely static but the content was changing, and I worked the two against each other. It was just a kind of catalyst that stimulated the original working out of the basic material, and I think I shall follow through the two types throughout the entire piece'.<sup>11</sup>

The sketches illustrate the extent to which this metaphor was applied to the precompositional material, particularly through the inter-relationships established between different 'squares', and the fact that different 'squares' were subjected to the same transforming operations, irrespective of whether they were based on the figure 5 (the 'Magic Square of Mars'), or the figure 6 (the 'Magic Square of the Sun').

The sketches for the symphony begin with a cover of torn-off manuscript marked 'New orchestral work 1980 first score'. There follows a thin sheet of typing paper characterized by a series of runes at the top and comprising a number of 'magic squares'; seven pages of preliminary material (written on thick paper); about fifty pages of extensive sketches.



Fig. 20. 'Magic Square' 3.

3	16	9	22	15
20	8	21	14	2
7	25	13	1	19
24	12	5	18	6
11	4	17	10	23

Fig. 21. 'Magic Square' 4.

Fig. 22. 'Magic Square' 5.

The sheet of manuscript contains three 5 x 5 'squares'.

It begins with a simple sequence of numbers (fig. 20: 'Magic Square' 3).

The initial 'development' of this 'square' involves pairs of numbers in red pencil, the second of which is slightly above, and to the right of the first. The first number represents the lowest number (but not 0) that can be obtained by subtracting 5 as many times as possible, while the right-hand figure refers to the number of multiples of 5 subtracted, plus 1. For instance, the second figure in Line 1 is 16, which can be reduced to 1 (left-hand figure) by subtracting 5 three times, and this, plus 1, yields a right-hand figure of 4. The left-hand numbers also determine the rhythmic values of the associated pitches, respectively quaver, crotchet, dotted crotchet, minim, dotted crotchet tied to crotchet. In combination, the numbers also indicate where they would have been located had the 'square' been set out 1-5, 6-10, 11-15, etc., thus (fig. 21: 'Magic Square' 4). To the right is another 'Square', organized in much the same way, except that further to the right of the pencil and red number systems is a stave of notes, one in pencil, the other in red. The order is number in pencil, numbers in red, note in pencil, note in red (fig. 22: 'Magic Square' 5).

Both these 'squares' exhibit symmetrical characteristics.

The image displays a handwritten musical exercise titled 'The Twelve Apostles'. It consists of five staves, each containing a series of rhythmic patterns. The notation is written in treble clef and uses a system of vertical lines with dots to represent notes and rests, with time signatures indicated by numbers and slashes.

- Staff 1:** 3/1/ • 1/4/ • 4/2/ • 2/5/ • 5/3/ •
- Staff 2:** 5/4/ • 3/2/# • 1/5/# • 4/3/ • 2/1/ •
- Staff 3:** 2/2/ • 5/5/ • 3/3/ • 1/1/ • 4/4/ •
- Staff 4:** 4/5/ • 2/3/ • 5/1/# • 3/4/ • 1/2/ •
- Staff 5:** 1/3/ • 4/1/ • 2/4/ • 5/2/ • 3/5/ •



In 'Magic Square' 4, the top and bottom lines correspond, as do the second and fourth lines; in 'Magic Square' 5, the second and fifth lines counterbalance one another, comprising, respectively, ascending and descending major thirds, while the first line consists of unisons, the third line of rising tritones, and the fourth line of rising tones.

Finally, a 'square' on the stave, the numbers of which relate to the pairs of numbers in 'Magic Square' 4, though the pitches tend to be different (fig. 23: 'Magic Square' 6).

The pitches of the last line are a transposed inversion of Line 1. The durational system is the same as in the earlier 'squares' except that on this occasion the values are determined by the second number of the pair. The pitch sequence outlined in Line 1 of 'Magic Square' 4 is the initial idea of the slow movement and appears frequently throughout the early sketches. Elsewhere in this 'square', the intervallic relationships include a tritone - g' sharp/d' (Line 3), while the final line repeats the opening motif of the slow movement, but with different durational values.

Later in the sketches, there is an unnumbered page containing material closely resembling that on the sheet of thin manuscript paper. Thus the numbers and fractions of 'Magic

Squares' 3 and 4 are combined in the following (fig. 24: 'Magic Square' 7).

The next 'square' includes pitches, utilizing the durational scheme already mentioned with values from quaver to dotted crotchet tied to crotchet. The numerical system is as set out in 'Magic Square' 7, omitting the first number. With the addition of the pitches, the result is very similar to 'Magic Square' 4 (fig. 25: 'Magic Square' 8).

'Magic Square' 9 is almost the same as the diad 'square' ('Magic Square' 5 (fig. 26: 'Magic Square' 9)).

The final 'square' on this unnumbered page ('Magic Square' 10) is almost identical to 'Magic Square' 6, except for some octave transpositions, and occasional variants of pitches (fig. 27: 'Magic Square' 10).

As will be seen from subsequent pages of sketches, Line 1 of the diad 'square' comprises a modified form of the first phrase of 'Nativitas Tua' - d c f g a sharp. Line 2 consists of a transposed version, beginning on the second note of Line 1 - c - together with the inverted interval - e - that is one pitch descending by a tone, the other ascending by a tone. Consequently, the second notes of the diads are created by inverting the five-note series. The pitch rotation continues in Line 3, which begins with the third note of Line 1 - f,

Fig. 28.

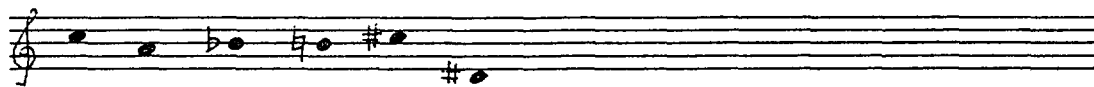


Fig. 29.



etc. By using the numerical system of 'Magic Square' 4 as a grid, and by applying this to the pitches of the diad 'square' (1/1, 2/1, 3/1), the square of pitches is generated. The first pitch of 'Magic Square' 4 - f' - numbered 3/1, consequently appears as the third pitch of Line 1 of 'Magic Square' 5. Furthermore, 'Magic Square' 6 is also related to 'Magic Square' 5, in that it is constructed from the second notes of the diads. Thus it comprises the pitches produced by means of the inverted transposition of the five-note series.

The first page of pre-compositional sketches on thick paper opens with six-note and eight-note pitch sequences, which are a transposed version of the 14-note series encountered in Black Pentecost. These are written in semibreves, and in this instance, the composer's practice of notating the pitches either flats or sharps without any attempt at consistency, has been followed (fig. 28), (fig. 29).

In combination, Notes 1 to 6 and 7 to 12 form a sequence of tritones, so that all the tritones includes in Line 3 of 'Magic Squares' 5 and 9 appear in the row. This means that the material on this page refers to the 5 x 5 'squares', and consequently to the two central movements where they are employed.

To the right of these is the plainsong sequence, 'Nativitas

Fig. 30.



Fig. 31.

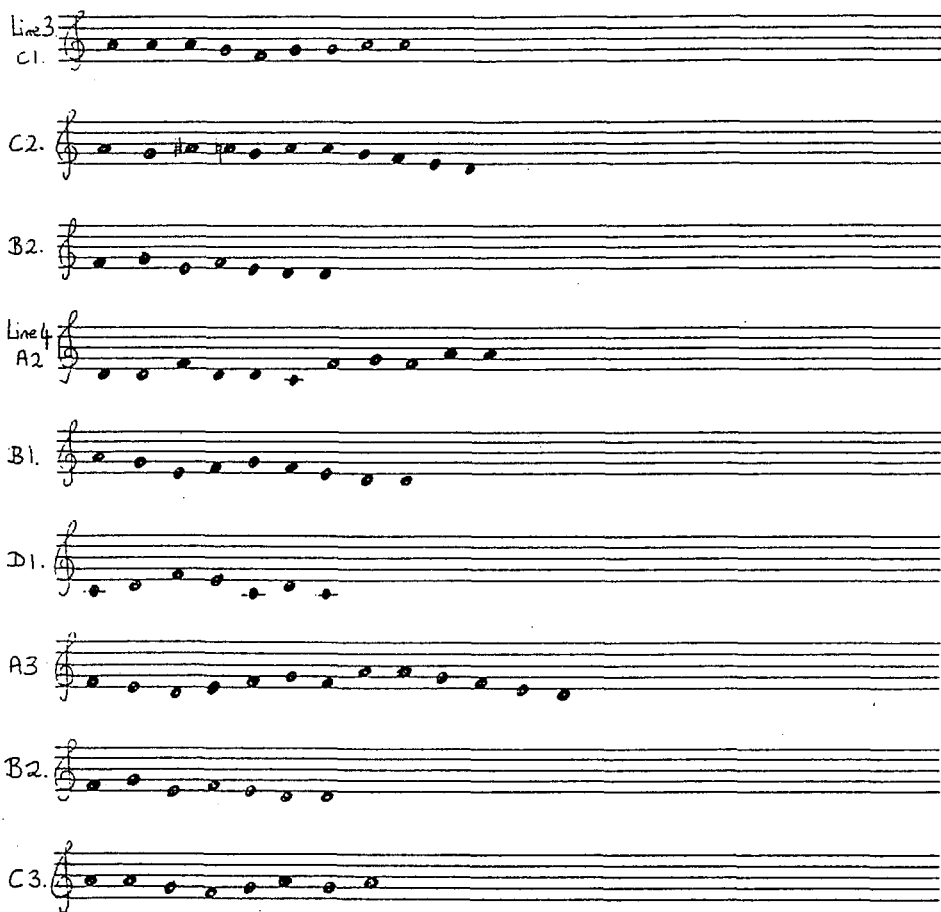
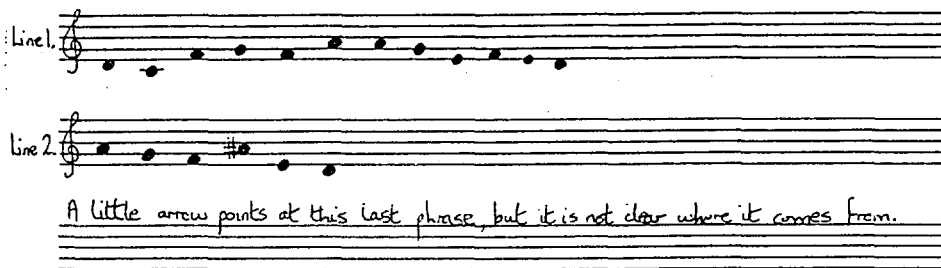


Fig. 32.





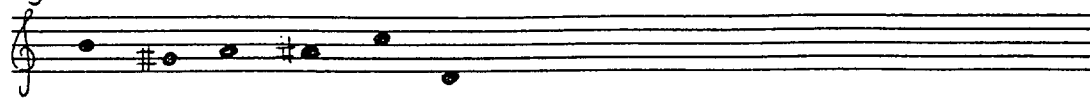
Tua', already mentioned, divided into phrases. The individual phrases are numbered (fig 30).

Further to the right again, the chant is re-written, divided into separate lines and with the omission of the final repeated note (fig 31).

The next line contains a series of numbers from 1 to 10, with Nos. 6 and 10 repeated. The series is then associated with a sequence of pitches to produce the equivalent of a 'twelve-note row', except that the rule concerning the use of all twelve notes is ignored (fig. 32).

Note that the repeated pitches constitute an interval of a tritone - the same tritone which had begun the third line of 'Magic squares' 5 and 9 - while the omitted notes also form a tritone - C/F sharp. In fact, if this second tritone is added to the series, the result is an inversion of the 14-note series from which figures 28 and 29 were derived, so that the note repetitions occur at the same points. In both cases, the tritone intervals have been highlighted. The tritone is marked '12' and is accompanied by a rune - a different symbol from the rune which is placed at the head of each page of sketches. The significance of runic symbols is unclear, except that they appear to function as a visual stimulus, rather like the star symbol in Black Pentecost. Some form of identification with Nordic culture is

Fig. 33.



undoubtedly involved, probably stemming from Mackay Brown's writings about the exploits of the Vikings in Orkney.

To the right is another phrase (fig. 33). This is the first six notes of the '12-note row' inverted and transposed on to B. Below this appears the first line of 'Nativitas Tua' with the individual pitches numbered and the repeated pitches shown with the numbers in brackets (fig. 34).

At the end of the line is the tritone, e'/a' sharp.

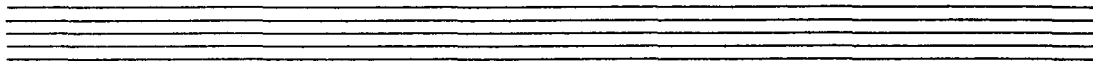
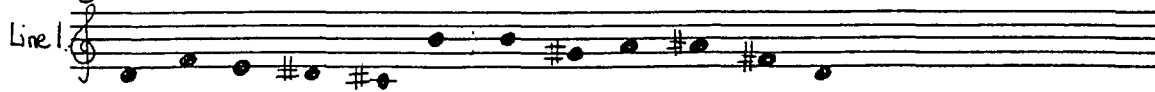
Next come the first eight notes of the earlier ten-note row, plus the tritone marked '12', followed by the concluding pitch of the row (fig. 35).

Beneath these pitches are two sequences of numbers - firstly, 1 to 6, and below that, 1 to 7. Approximately level with the latter is the following (fig. 36).

Lines and arrows indicate that this is a re-arrangement of material so that, discounting interpolations, the following corresponds to Nos 1 to 6 (fig. 37).

The tritone is interpolated and is marked '2'. The page concludes with a series of notes, not all of which are numbered (fig. 38).

Fig. 39.



The second page includes a variety of different runes besides two larger ones. The music notation begins with three lines, each comprising a 12-note row, divided into equal halves. The middle line is crossed out, but is still legible. The third line is a repeat of the middle line, transposed up a tritone (fig. 39).

From this it will be seen that because of various repetitions, the most obvious of which are the first and final pitches, as well as the two central notes, the rows do not comprise all twelve notes of the chromatic scale. In the first row, pitches 7 to 10 are a retrograde inversion of pitches 1 to 4. The other rows reproduce the first line of 'Nativitas Tua' (see especially the version associated with the number sequence 1 to 6, where the repeated notes have been omitted).

Further down the page are six staves, each containing a row. As before, the rows are divided into equal halves and note repetitions mean that all twelve pitches are not employed. The difference is that above the fifth note in each half is written another note in black. The pairs of notes on each line usually have the same intervallic value, but these vary from line to line:

- Line 1 - tritone;
- Line 2 - fourth and minor third;
- Line 3 - major third;

Fig. 40.



Fig. 41. 'Magic Square' 11.

6	2	3	4	5	1
1	5	3	4	2	6
1	2	4	3	5	6
6	2	4	3	5	1
1	5	4	3	2	6
6	5	3	4	2	1

Fig. 42. 'Magic Square' 12.

6	32	3	34	35	1	11	29	28	8	30
7	11	27	28	8	30					
19	14	16	15	23	24					
18	20	22	21	17	13					
25	29	10	9	26	12					
36	5	33	4	2	31					

Line 4 - minor third;  
Line 5 - minor second;  
Line 6 - octave.

The first row is identical to Line 1 of fig. 39 , except that note 5 - c' sharp - is joined by g', and Note 11 - f' sharp - is joined by c''. The remaining rows are as follows (fig. 40).

Each line begins a semitone higher than its predecessor with the exception of the last line, which starts a tone higher. The middle pitch (notes 6 and 7) also rises - b', b', c'', c'' sharp, d'', d'' sharp.

Further to the right is another 'magic square', each line having two number systems and one set of pitches. This is a 6 x 6 'square' (fig. 41: 'Magic Square' 11).

The associated fraction 'square', together with its pitches, was generated from the following number 'square' which, like the third 'square' on a later page of sketches, numbered both 1 in a diamond and 3 in a diamond, to be discussed below, was derived from the immediately preceding 'squares' at the top of the same page (fig. 42: 'Magic Square' 12).

The sum total of each line is 111, and Maxwell Davies has adopted a 'modus operandi' analogous to that used for the 5 x

Fig. 43. 'Magic Square' 13.



Fig 44. 'Magic Square' 14.





5 'squares'. The '12-note plus' series (see, particularly, the first line of fig. 39) is divided into separate portions to form the top lines of the two 'squares' at the top of the page numbered diamond 1 and diamond 3 (fig. 43: 'Magic Square' 13).

Note: Although the fifth line comprises a sequence of tritones, drawing together all the tritones outlined as the fifth item of the remaining lines, the final member of the sequence, numbered as 30/5/6, may be a 'sharp/d'' sharp, which would be an interval of a fourth. However, the fifth item of Line 6, numbered 35/6/5/ is given as a 'sharp/e'', and in 'Magic Square' 15, it will be seen that 30/5/6 is written as e'/a' sharp. (fig. 44: 'Magic Square' 14).

Note: The last line could be an octave higher.

The first line of 'Magic Square' 13 reproduces the first half of the row, outlined as the top line of fig. 39. Similarly, the first line of 'Magic Square' 14 reproduces the second half of the same row. As the second half of the row is a transposed inversion of the first half, the top line of 'Magic Square' 14 is a transposed inversion of its counterpart in 'Magic Square' 13. Furthermore, as the remaining lines are formed by means of pitch rotation, so that the first pitch of Line 2 is taken from the second note of Line 1, and the first pitch of Line 3 is the third note of

Fig. 45. 'Magic Square' 15.

Handwritten musical notation for Fig. 45, 'Magic Square' 15. The notation is complex, featuring many accidentals and ties. The notes are often grouped in pairs or triplets, and there are many accidentals (sharps, flats, naturals) throughout the piece.

Fig. 46. 'Magic Square' 16.

Handwritten musical notation for Fig. 46, 'Magic Square' 16. The notation is complex, featuring many accidentals and ties. The notes are often grouped in pairs or triplets, and there are many accidentals (sharps, flats, naturals) throughout the piece.

Line 1, etc., the principle of transposed inversion is extended to the whole 'square'. 'Magic Squares' 15 and 16 share the same fraction number system. Because this is associated with the number systems used in 'Magic squares' 13 and 14, determining where the pitches will be drawn from the respective 'squares', they are also related by the principle of transposed inversion. The pitch content of 'Magic Square' 15 is drawn from 'Magic Square' 13 (fig. 45: 'Magic Square' 15).

'Magic Square' 15 has already been identified with the two number systems on the second page of Maxwell Davies's sketches, while 'Magic Square' 16 appears as the third 'square' on the page numbered diamond 1 and diamond 3. Its pitch content is drawn from 'Magic Square' 14 (fig. 46: 'Magic Square' 16).

There are three significant discrepancies as compared with 'Magic Square' 14, and these are confirmed by consulting 'Magic Square' 18, below. In Line 1, 32/6/2/ should read b, rather than a sharp; in Line 3, 16/3/4 should be g' sharp, not a'; in Line 4, 17/3/5, it should be a tritone, e'/a' sharp, instead of d' sharp/a' sharp. If these are suitably amended, it will be found that the same inverted transpositions linking 'Magic Squares' 13 and 14, also obtain with regard to 'squares' 15 and 16. Finally, in these 'squares' the last number always represents the

Fig. 47.



Fig. 48. 'Magic Square' 17.

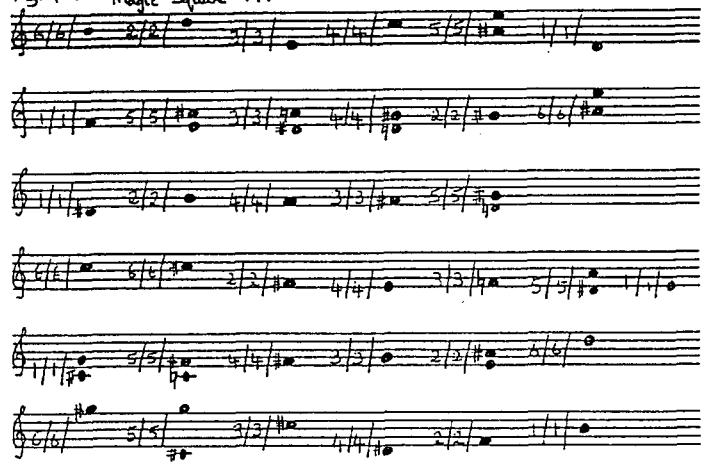


Fig. 49. 'Magic Square' 18.



durational values of the pitches.

The third 'square' on Page diamond no. 1-3 is followed by a long line of notes, usually grouped into chords, and frequently separated by barlines (fig. 47). Page 4 of the sketches contains 'magic squares'. (fig. 48: 'Magic Square' 17). (fig. 49: 'Magic Square' 18).

It will be seen that 'Magic Square' 17 conforms to 'Magic Square' 15, and 'Magic Square' 18, to 'Magic Square' 16, so the observations made about the earlier 'squares' are also applicable to the pair on Page 4 of the sketches. On each line of 'Magic Square' 18, the last two notes are arrowed. The penultimate note is arrowed forward to the last note on the even-numbered lines, while the final note of the odd-numbered lines is arrowed back to the penultimate note.

The remainder of the page comprises a series of Runic symbols set out in no obvious order, plus reference to the Leonardo's drawings, and to Gide, already mentioned.

The page designated as Page 5 continues work on the 6 x 6 'squares', but the arrangement is more complex than previously in that each line is in two halves, both governed by the same numerical system, except that the second half has more notes than the first. In between are notes which have been deleted, but which are still legible. The customary

Fig 50. "Maze Square" 19.

Line 1 - First Half:

Line 1 - deletions:

Line 1 - second half:

Line 2 - First Half:

Line 2 - deletions:

Line 2 - Second Half:

Line 3 - First Half:

Line 3 - deletions:

Line 3 - Second Half:

Line 3 - Second Half:

Line 4 - First Half:

Line 4 - deletions:

Line 4 - Second Half:

Line 5 - First Half:

Line 5 - deletions:

Line 5 - Second Half:

Line 5 - deletions: (may be #)

Line 5 - Second Half:

Line 5 - deletions:

Line 6 - First Half:

Line 6 - deletions:

Line 6 - Second Half:

duration scheme applies to the first half of each line (fig. 50: 'Magic Square' 19).

The numerical arrangement of this 'square' is identical with 'Magic Squares' 17 and 18, but the pitch material is derived predominantly from 'Magic Square' 17.

The material is presented in the form of six two-stave systems, the top stave always functioning as a 'cantus firmus'. Accordingly, the durational values are amended:

- 1 = minim;
- 2 = semibreve;
- 3 = dotted semibreve;
- 4 = longa;
- 5 = longa plus minim;
- 6 = dotted longa.

Line 1 is based on top line of 'Magic Square' 17;

Line 2 is drawn from equivalent line of 'Magic Square' 17, but transposed up an augmented 4th to begin on B;

Line 3 relates to 3rd line of 'Magic Square' 17, but transposed up a minor 6th to begin on B. Thus each line is transposed to begin on B.

In the first 'system', the 'accompaniment' for Bar 1 (under B) comprises pitches 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 of Line 6 of 'Square' 17,

in which pitch 6 is B. Bar 2 (under D) has pitches 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 from Line 5 of 'Square' 17, and this time Pitch 6 is D.

In the second 'system', the 'accompaniment' for Bar 1 (under B) utilizes pitches 6, 4, 3, 2, 1 of Line 6 of 'Square' 17, transposed up an augmented fourth. Bar 2 (under B flat/E) uses pitches 6, 4, 3, 2, 1 of Line 5 of 'Square' 17, also transposed up an augmented 4th, etc. The 'square' is organized in such a way that if the fifth item on each line of 'Magic Square' 17 is transposed up an augmented 4th, the pitch or pitches will be the same as the 'cantus firmus'.

The 'accompaniment' for 'System' 3 is: Bar 1 (under B) pitches 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 of Line 6 of 'Square' 17, transposed up a minor 6th; Bar 2 (under E flat) all the pitches from Line 5 of the same 'square', again transposed up a minor 6th. The remaining 'systems' are based on the same principle and are transposed, respectively, down a major second, up a major third, down a major 6th.

The last two pages of preliminary sketches comprise more sporadic series of chords and pitches. The first of these is numbered both Page 2 and Page 4, including a number of chords written on four staves, some of which are sustained for up to five bars. The chords on Page 6 are written with scoring indications, particularly for horns, and thus form a 'bridge' to the alternative sketches.





Nevertheless, there is evidence that at least some of the material of the precompositional sketches reached the final score as originally stated. Besides the opening motto of the slow movement, quoting the top line of 'Magic Square' 4, or the direct reference to 'Nativitas Tua' at the beginning of the scherzo, which is clearly audible despite the radical alteration of its rhythmic contour, there are other allusions to both sets of 'squares' throughout the work to suggest that they are always used in conjunction with one another, even though it may appear that, for instance, the first movement is based predominantly on the 6 x 6 'squares', and the slow movement on the 5 x 5 'squares'. Thus, in the opening movement, between Letters (O) and (q), there are quotations from 'Nativitas Tua' on pizzicato), double-basses, and at letter (O), the following half row is outlined in the trombones - (fig. 51) and this recurs at Letter (C1), in the highest register of the violins, where it is extended into a more or less complete row, by quoting the top lines of both 6 x 6 'squares' - (fig. 52). The violins have the row again at (Letter D1), and an abbreviated variant just before Letter (N1). At Letter (H1), the harp foreshadows the 'motto' of the slow movement by quoting a slightly amended version - (fig. 53).

In the finale, there is a reference to 'Nativitas Tua' at Letter (A), and also to the top lines of the two 'Squares'

Fig. 54

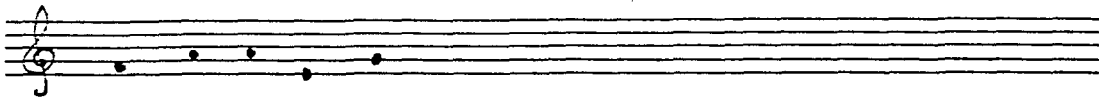


Fig. 55

$\frac{1}{2} \# \rightarrow + \frac{1}{2} \pm$

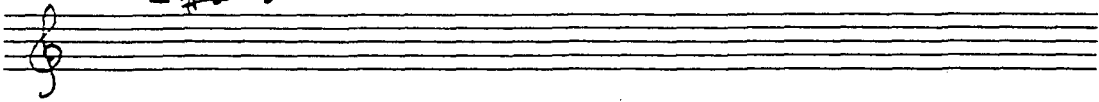


Fig. 56



derived from the diad 'square' - 'Magic Squares' 4 and 6, respectively. Firstly, the slow movement motif ('Square' 4) appears transposed down a minor third, to start on D, and this is followed by an inversion of the top line of 'Square' 6 - (fig. 54) - also transposed down a minor third, to read (fig. 55).

#### Alternative Sketches.

These sketches appear to represent a transitional stage prior to the first attempts at actual composition. The first page is headed 'First Part'. It has groups of five pitches which are then crossed out, though there are lines radiating from them in all directions. The groups are arranged with two bars to a line, and the lines are numbered 1 to 5. In addition, there are a series of diagonals numbered B1 and B2, the bars of which are numbered from 1 to 14. There are three pages of this kind of material, with a series of 'squares' on the third page. A fourth page is headed 'First Trans', and there follows some material marked O.T. and N.T.

Page 1. Groups mainly written in crotchets. The five odd-numbered bars reproduce the five lines of 'Magic Square' 4; the even-numbered bars reproduce the equivalent lines of 'Magic Square' 6 (fig. 56).

Under this line, two number systems are introduced but their

Fig. 57.



Fig. 58.

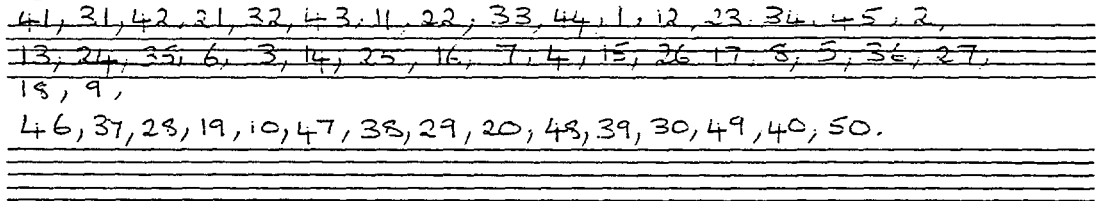


Fig. 59.



significance is obscure. The first runs from 5 to 14, and directly below, the second runs from 1 to 10. Hence they form a network - 5/1, 6/2, 7/3, etc.

B1 Diagonal. The numbers refer to bars, some of them comprising a single note (fig. 57).

This diagonal is the result of placing 'Magic Squares' 4 and 6 alongside each other, numbering Line 1 1 to 10, Line 2, 11 to 20, etc., and selecting the pitches in the following order (fig. 58).

The progression is from top left to bottom right diagonals on the left-hand 'square', and bottom left to top right diagonals on the right-hand 'square'.

To the top right of this diagonal is a pitch sequence (all crotchets), divided into two lines designated H1 and H0, respectively (fig. 59).

The H1 line has 19 pitches derived from 'Magic Square' 6 with the omission or substitution of repeated notes. The first three notes are drawn from Line 1; the next line constitutes Line 2, except that f' sharp replaces one of the g' pitches; Pitch 9 is the single note of line 3; the remaining notes comprise the last two lines, with the omission of the g' from Line 5.

Fig. 60.



Fig. 61.



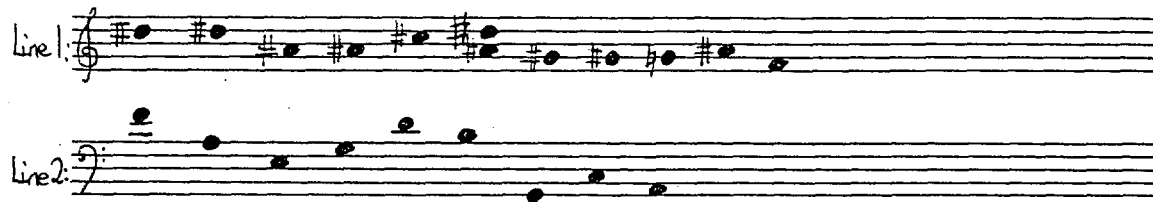
H0 has 20 pitches, using the same procedure with regard to 'Magic Square' 4. The first four notes are from Line 1, omitting the second f'; three notes are taken from Line 2; then follows the complete Line 3; three notes of Line 4, omitting the final d', as well as the repeated note; and all five pitches of Line 5, representing the initial motif of the slow movement.

The following is derived from H1 and H0 (fig. 60).  
B2 diagonal (fig. 61).

The B2 diagonal is derived from 'Magic Squares' 4 and 6 in a similar way to the B1 diagonal, except that the process is reversed. The 'diagonals' are formed by literally tracing diagonal paths through 'Magic Squares' 4 and 6. As illustrated in fig. 58, the B1 diagonal begins with the first pitch of Line 5, then the first pitch of line 4, then the second note of Line 5, first note of third line, second note of fourth line, fifth note of fifth line, first note of second line, etc. The length of each diagonal determines the number of notes in each bar. At the mid-point of the diagonal, the pattern interlaces the two 'squares', before attention is concentrated on 'Magic Square' 6. The B2 diagonal follows the same overall pattern, but the individual diagonals are slightly different. Again, it begins with the first pitch of Line 5, but then the second



Fig. 62.



pitch of Line 5, first pitch of Line 4, third note of Line 5, second of Line 4, first of Line 3, etc. Both diagonals are characterized by a change of direction for the second half, at which point he progresses up the right-hand 'square' - 'Magic Square' 6.

Next come two lines of music which appear to be an initial attempt at orchestration, though they are hardly legible (fig. 62).

Line 2 appears to be the pitches, minus repeats, of Lines 1, 3, 5 of 'Magic Square' 6.

There follows a further sequence, divided into two lines, with the notes being linked by elaborate triangular shapes (fig. 63).

Line 2 reproduces the pitches of 'Magic Square' 6, but omitting repeated pitches - f of Line 2 and b of Line 5.

The sequence marked 'figure 1' is an expanded version of the opening 'motto' of the slow movement. It is also an elaboration of Fig. 60 (fig. 64).

The second page of these alternative sketches is marked '3A' across the top. It has five lines of pitches marked with Roman numerals. There is a dual numbering system

Fig. 65.

Line 1

Line 2

Line 3

Line 4

Line 5

The image shows five staves of handwritten musical notation. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes various notes (quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes), rests, and bar lines. Some staves have additional markings such as 'Bar 2' and 'Bar 3'. The notation is somewhat complex, with many accidentals and time signatures.

associated with most of the notes. the lower number, which appears first, is associated with the duration scheme based on semiquaver units; the upper system, in pencil, which does not appear with every pitch, is approximately equivalent to a duration scheme based on quavers. In fact, the pitches are a conflation of 'Magic Squares' 4 and 6, but in retrograde. In Line 1, the first five notes are a retrograde version of the top line of 'Magic Square' 4, transposed down an augmented 4th. The remaining pitches are a retrograde version of the top line of 'Magic Square' 6, transposed up an augmented 4th (fig. 65).

In the first line, the numbers in pencil are accompanied by minus signs; in Line 2, all but the last of the pencil numbers are associated with a plus sign, the exception having a minus sign; in Line 3, with the exception of the penultimate note, all the pencil numbers are accompanied by a minus sign; all the pencil numbers in Line 4 are also associated with a minus sign, except the last pitch, which has a plus sign; in the final line, all the pencil numbers except the first are linked to a plus sign.

Next come groups of material marked 29A, 29B, 29C, 29D, 30A and 30B. 29A has a 12/16 time signature, plus dotted quaver = 80, and comprises three lines. It is marked 1. All three lines are divided into four bars. The top line is a repeat of Line 1 of Fig. 65, complete with durational system;

Fig. 66



Fig. 67. 'Magic Square' 20.

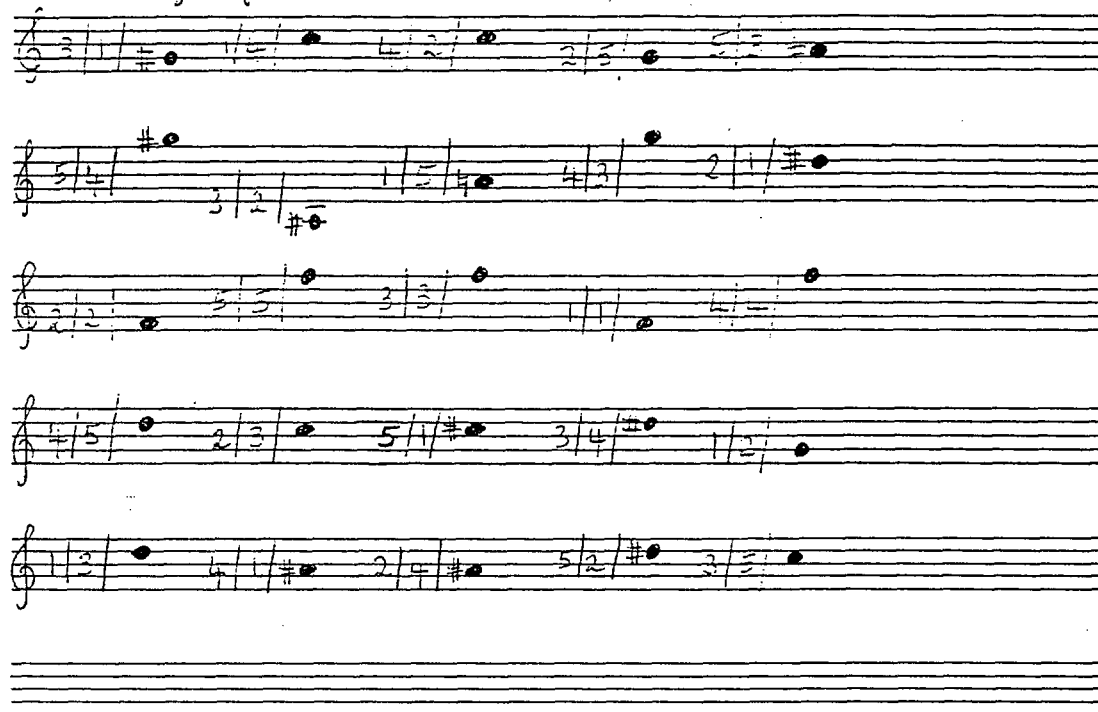


Fig. 68. 'Magic Square' 21.



Line 2 is a series of diads, and line 3 consists of quavers (fig. 66).

The problem with the remainder of this material is that several lines are illegible. This is true of the quavers associated with 29B and 29C, extending to 29D, as well as another series of quavers which comprise the first of three lines of 30A. It is nevertheless possible to see that the first line of 29B reproduces Line 2 of fig. 65, with the interpolation of extra pitches, that Line 3 of fig. 65 begins in the middle of 29C and extends through 29D. During 29D, the status of Line 3 of fig. 65 is altered by the addition of quavers as the top line, and Line 4 of fig. 65 recurs as the middle line of 30A. Line 5 of fig. 65 is outlined as the first of three lines of 30B. Meanwhile, in the middle lines of 29B, 29C and 29D, the diads are replaced by sustained pitches against which are grouped several notes of smaller value. There are no sustained pitches in 30A, but the diads return in 30B, in a similar arrangement to 29A. There are also some sustained pitches in the final line. The third page of alternative sketches contains six 5 x 5 'squares', grouped in pairs. (fig. 67: 'Magic Square' 20). 5 (fig. 68: 'Magic Square' 21)..

In 'Magic Square' 20, the second number denotes the durational value, whereas in 'Magic Square' 21, the first number fulfils this function. This last 'square' is the same

Fig. 69. 'Magic Square' 22.

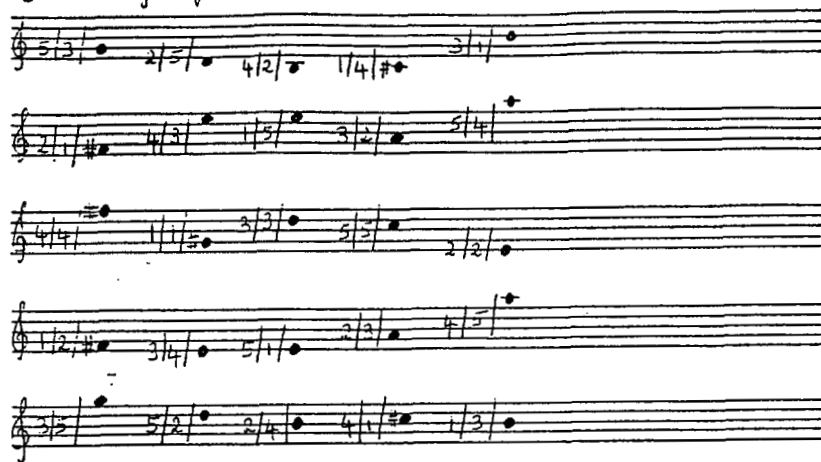


Fig. 70. 'Magic Square' 23.

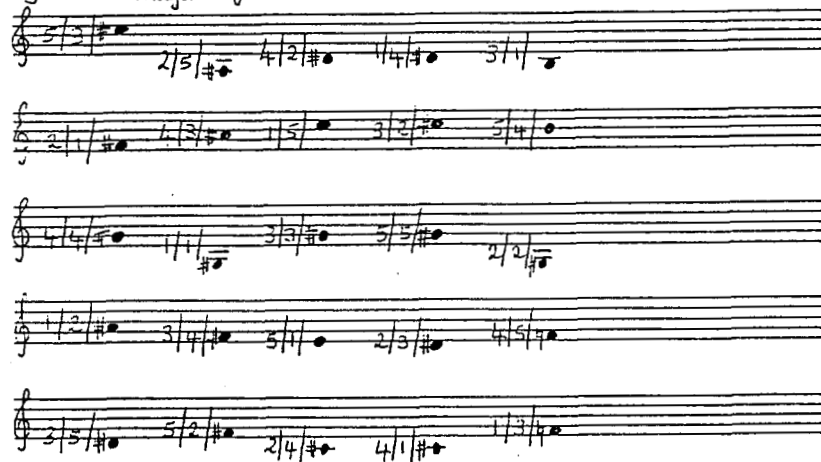


Fig. 71. 'Magic Square' 24.

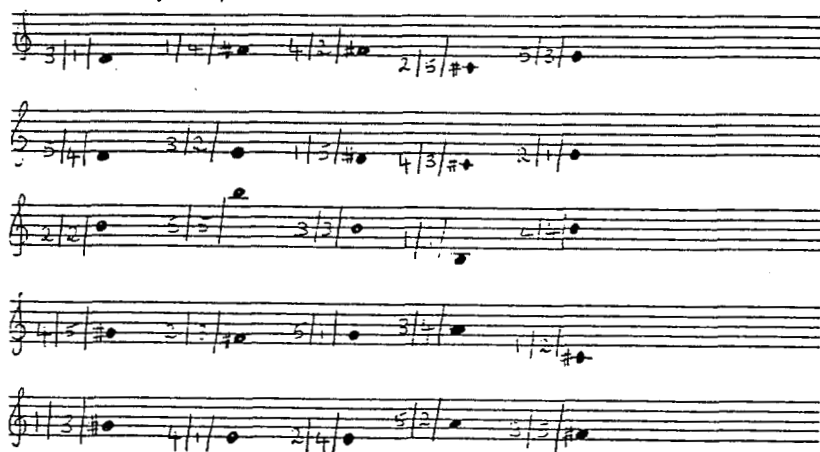
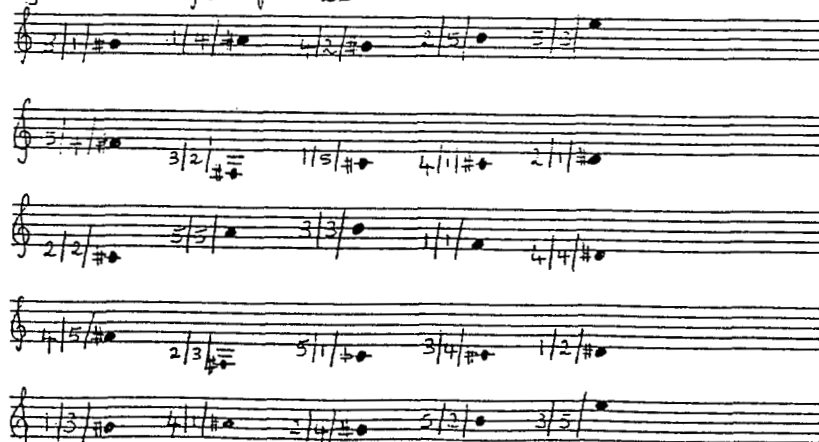


Fig. 72. 'Magic Square' 25.



as 'Magic Square' 4, including the durational scheme, except that the pitch material is transposed down a minor third.

'Magic Square' 20 conforms in every respect to 'Magic Square' 6, but this time the pitch material has been transposed up a minor third.

The left-hand 'Square' in the following pair is marked figure 3. The durational values are denoted in reverse to the preceding pair, so that the first number is responsible in 'Magic Square' 22, the second number in 'Magic Square' 23. (fig. 69: 'Magic Square' 22), (fig. 70: 'Magic Square' 23).

In both these 'squares', the numbering system is the same as in the preceding pair, allowing for the fact that each line is reversed. 'Magic Square' 22 is also a retrograde of 'Magic Square' 21, allowing for the transposition of the pitch material up a major 6th, while 'Magic Square' 23 is a similar reflection of 'Square' 20, with the pitch material transposed down a major 6th. Note that by placing 'Squares' 22 and 23 alongside each other, fig. 65 is obtained.

In the third pair of 'Squares', the left-hand 'Square' is designated Figure 4. This time, the durations in the first of the pair ('Magic Square' 24) are controlled by the second number, while the first number determines the durations in the second ('Magic Square' 25). (fig. 71: 'Magic Square' 24), (fig. 72: 'Magic Square' 25). 'Magic Square' 24 is the



Fig. 73.

Handwritten musical score for Fig. 73, consisting of seven staves (Line 1 to Line 7). The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines. The score is written in a single system with a common key signature and time signature. The staves are labeled Line 1 through Line 7 on the left side. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines. The score is written in a single system with a common key signature and time signature. The staves are labeled Line 1 through Line 7 on the left side.

Fig. 74.

Handwritten musical score for Fig. 74, consisting of seven staves (Line 1 to Line 7). The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines. The score is written in a single system with a common key signature and time signature. The staves are labeled Line 1 through Line 7 on the left side. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines. The score is written in a single system with a common key signature and time signature. The staves are labeled Line 1 through Line 7 on the left side. A handwritten note is present at the end of Line 6: "There is an indication that both bars could be played an octave higher."

same as 'Magic Square' 20, except that the pitches are transposed down a tritone; 'Magic Square' 25 is similarly related to 'Magic Square' 21, but the pitch material is transposed up a tritone.

The next two pages contain note rows. The first of these pages is designated 'First Trans', and is also marked 'O.T.' and 'N.T.'. Both have seven lines, each divided into two bars, respectively on the left and right side of the page. Durations are not shown. (fig. 73: O.T.)

This clearly represents some form of transformation process. The final pitch in the odd-numbered bars rises progressively by a tone, the penultimate note by a semitone; the third note from the end also rises by a semitone, except between Lines 4 and 5. The process does not appear to be systematic, but the effect is that the interval between the last two notes expands from a unison to a tritone. By contrast, the interval between the last two notes of the even-numbered bars (frequently bracketed) contracts from a tritone to a unison.

The first line of 'N.T.' is the same as that of 'O.T.', except that the notes are given durational values. Thereafter, the two systems tend to diverge. (fig. 74: N.T.)

The page also includes some details of instrumentation, with particular reference to trumpet, glockenspiel, flute and

Fig. 75.

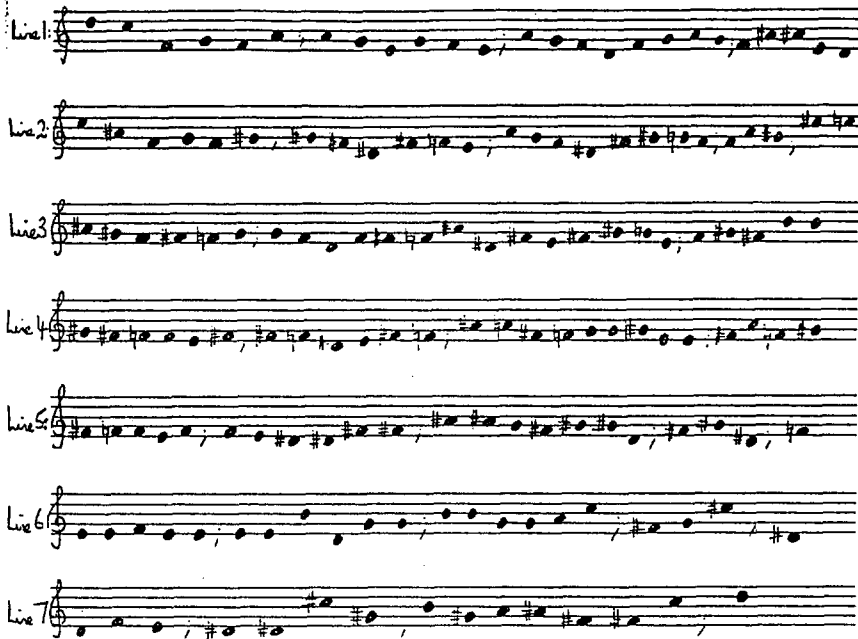


Fig. 76.

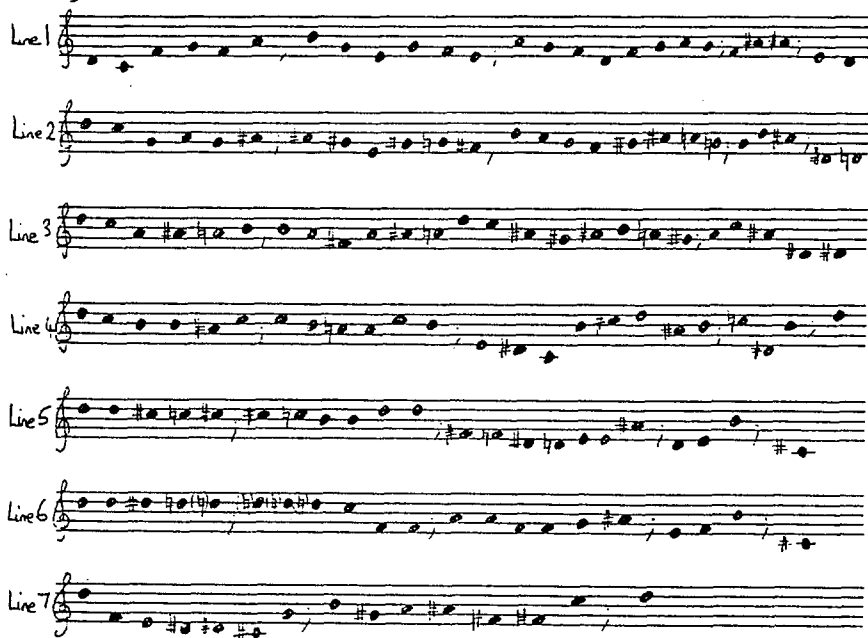


Fig. 77.



marimba. The flute part begins with the first line of both O.T. and N.T. The second line of O.T. is also written out, but without precise indications of instrumentation - possibly flute.

The next page is also marked 'First Trans'. The material is grouped into seven numbered lines, with each line being divided into three main blocks (roughly corresponding to bars, although there are no actual bar-lines). There are a couple of stray notes at the end of the lines (fig. 75).

The first two groups of Line 1 are drawn from 'Nativitas Tua', while the final line somewhat resembles the 14-note row associated with the 6 x 6 'squares'.

There follows another group of seven lines organized according to the same principles. In the first line, the pitches are virtually identical (fig. 76). To the right, this material is again reproduced mainly as a series of quavers and semiquavers. The top line is closely related to that of fig. 76, but thereafter there are several amendments (fig. 77).

Having concentrated on the slow movement in the first page marked 'First Trans' both the five-line sequence and the diagonals being derived from 'Magic Squares' 4 and 6, the second page also marked 'First Trans' resumes work on the 6 x

6 'squares' in conjunction with the plainsong, 'Nativitas Tua'. The initial line in both seven-line sequences quotes the plainchant phrase associated with the words 'Nativitas Tua, Generis Virgo', excluding repeats. Thereafter, it varies, but its significance stems from the fact that subsequent lines each begin with a transposition of this material. The first note is transposed down a tone each time; the second note is transposed down a tone, tone, tone, semitone, semitone; the third note remains on F for each line. A different transposition system is adopted for the second group. While the first two notes of the initial phrase remain the same for the first four lines, the remaining pitches are progressively transposed upwards by a tone. The interval between the last two notes of the phrase is also successively reduced from a major third to a semitone. The transformation of the remaining material is governed by a more discernible pattern than in the earlier seven-line group. From Line 2, the second phrase starts a semitone higher each time, ascending from a' sharp to d'' sharp. The contour of the third phrase is also similar on each appearance. This procedure has many affinities with the material marked 'N.T.' and 'O.T.' in the sketches for Stone Litany. As Peter Owens has pointed out, the pitch material was divided into three groups, and the top line was marked plus, 0, minus, denoting that the appropriate notes were to be sharpened by a semitone, unaltered, or flattened by a semitone. The transformation process then involved a

Second Line

Handwritten musical notation on a system of eight staves. The notation includes various notes, rests, and accidentals. The text "Second Line" is written vertically on the right side of the system.

Handwritten musical notation on a system of eight staves. The notation includes various notes, rests, and accidentals.

Handwritten musical notation on a system of eight staves. The notation includes various notes, rests, and accidentals.

nine-stage grid, controlled by all possible permutations of the plus-0-minus, resulting in a systematic alteration of the intervalic contours. However, by the time of the Second Symphony, 'Magic Squares' had become the chief agent of 'transformation processes', so that less reliance has been placed on other procedures.

The first line of the second group outlines some of the opening material of the scherzo. The first phrase is identical with the initial idea, and the third and fourth phrases also appear in this form in the final score. The pitch material written in quavers and semiquavers is also associated with the scherzo. Although it is considerably modified, it can still be recognized as forming the basis of the string writing.

The next page is headed 'diagonals', which are numbered 1 to 14. The following is an approximate version (fig. 78).

The second diagonal is constructed along similar lines except that it is divided into two lines, 8/9 (fig. 79).

These diagonals are derived, respectively, from the B1 and B2 diagonals outlined earlier, though in the case of the latter, not so systematically. The 'second lines' mentioned with regard to 8 and 9 refer to pitches underlined in ink, and elsewhere on the page, the first horn part is similarly

Fig. 80:

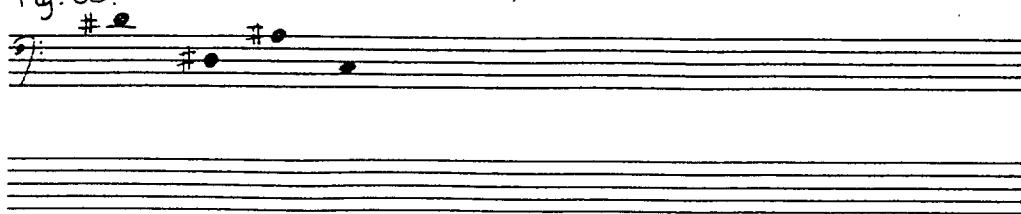


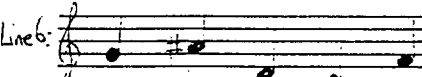
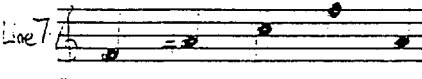


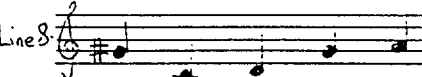
Fig. 81.


Line 4: 


Line 5: 

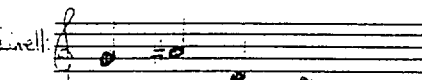
Line 6: 


Line 7: 

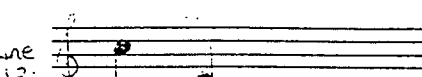
Line 8: 

Line 9: 

Line 10: 

Line 11: 

Line 12: 

Line 13: 

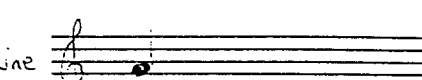
Line 14: 

Fig. 52.





underlined (fig. 80).

This constitutes the fourth of five lines of material actually designated 'strings', but also including references to alto flute. The pitches are drawn from the first of these diagonals.

The next page has another diagonal. This is not numbered as previously, but some of the notes are written with a felt pen. The pitches thus singled out form the top line of four lines of orchestral scoring. There are no details of instrumentation as such, except that the third line is marked 'strings, pizz.' The first three lines are the pitch and durational equivalents of the B1 diagonal; Line 4 equals Bars 1/4 of original version; Line 5 equals Bar 5 and Line 6, Bar 6, etc. (fig. 81).

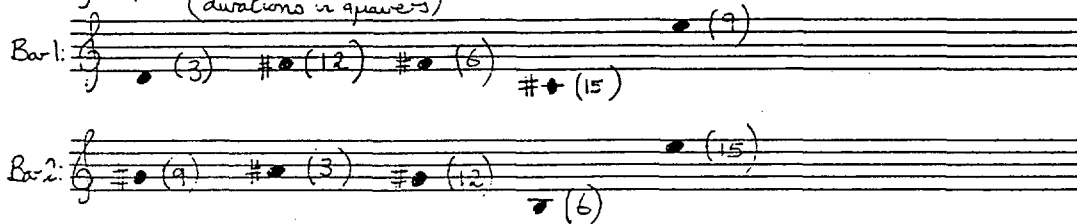
The next page has some numbers and stray notes with numerous connecting lines, but none of the pitches are highlighted. Then comes a page marked 'top line, alto flute; bottom line, bass clarinet'. This has only two staves, for the respective instruments, but the beginnings of other instrumental parts are later added. These tend to be illegible, but some notes are circled, shared between second clarinet and oboe (fig. 82).

Other circled notes are also written out in the form of a

Fig. 83.



Fig. 84. (durations in quavers)



'row'. There are 12 pitches, but it is not a conventional series because notes are repeated (fig. 83).

The next page is numbered 4A. In the first line, it has 'times 1, 1', with numbers above the notes. There are more numbers than notes and the latter include durational values. There is also a numerical system on the side: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. With the exception of Lines 2 and 3, which are governed by the figure 4, each number is associated with a single line. The top line is linked to the number 5, and is divided into two bars totalling 30 quavers, while Lines 2 and 3 have 45 quavers each, both written as a single bar. They are marked 'times 1, + half'. The fourth line is numbered 3, and has a total of 60 quavers, divided into two 30-quaver bars on a single line. It is marked 'times 2'.

The fifth line is numbered 2 and is divided into two bars, each with 75 quavers. Line 6 is associated with figure 1, and is designated 'times + 3'. It is divided into two bars, each of 45 quavers. Note, the odd numbers - 45 and 75, have that many quavers in each bar, with a single pitch being sustained for up to 25 quavers, whereas the even numbers require both bars to reach the appropriate number of quavers. The individual bars all have five pitches each, and these are largely unfamiliar, apart from the two bars of the sixth line, which have transposed versions of the top lines of 'Magic Squares' 6 and 4, respectively (fig. 84).

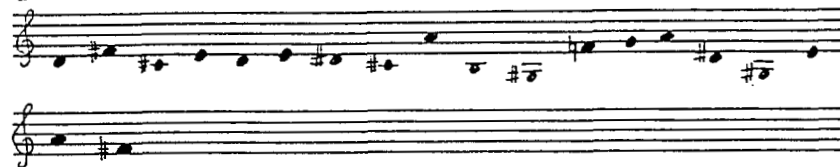
Fig. 85.



Fig. 66.



Fig. 87.



There follow five lines as though set out for the orchestra. These are numbered 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, in accordance with the lines of quavers already mentioned. The bottom line is the same as figure 1, and its first two notes are sounded before line 2 joins in. This is identical to the line numbered 2 (above). Line 3 (as 3 above) enters in Bar 4, and consists of a series of B's. The line designated 4 begins in bar 5, and Line 5 enters in bar 7.

The next page is numbered 4B, and the first two lines are marked 1 to 14 (fig. 85).

The rest of the page is devoted to an extensive series of pitches, written as crotchets or quavers, but without any other distinguishing features, such as a numerical system. The fact that they do not conform to a discernible pattern suggests that no organizing principle is involved.

The next page is numbered 2A, and has two sequences of material, with four lines all governed by the numbers 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and four more lines numbered 9, 8, 7, 6, 5. To the right, are two groups of pitches, the first of which is marked 'H0, on A flat' (fig. 86).

There is also a series of pitches designated 'H1 on D' (fig. 87).

Handwritten musical notation on five staves. The notation includes various notes, rests, and accidentals. The staves are numbered 10, 9, 8, 7, and 6 from top to bottom. The text "Line 2" is written on the bottom staff.

Handwritten musical notation on five staves. The notation includes various notes, rests, and accidentals. The staves are numbered 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 from top to bottom. The text "Line 4: 9: nothing" is written on the second staff from the bottom.

Handwritten musical notation on five staves. The notation includes various notes, rests, and accidentals. The staves are numbered 3, 9, 5, 6, and 7 from top to bottom. The text "Line 2" is written on the second staff from the bottom.

Handwritten musical notation on five staves. The notation includes various notes, rests, and accidentals. The staves are numbered 9, 7, 6, 10, and 9 from top to bottom. The text "Line 2" is written on the second staff from the bottom.

Handwritten musical notation on five staves. The notation includes various notes, rests, and accidentals. The staves are numbered 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 from top to bottom. The text "Line 1" is written on the second staff from the bottom.

Handwritten musical notation on five staves. The notation includes various notes, rests, and accidentals. The staves are numbered 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 from top to bottom. The text "Line 4" is written on the second staff from the bottom.

(fig.88: First Four-Line Series).

(fig. 89: Second Four-Line Series).

This partial discussion of the sketches for the second Symphony does not purport to analyse Maxwell Davies's compositional process in detail, since there is an obvious gap between the pre-compositional sketches and the final appearance of the score. Everything else takes place in the creative imagination, and the alternative sketches give only the faintest glimpse of what might be involved. The conclusion of David Roberts's thesis can therefore be applied to this chapter, in that these discoveries are, 'as far as my experience of the music goes', profoundly trivial.

Nevertheless, they indicate the way in which a simple metaphor, based on personal experience, can inspire the creation of complex symmetrical patterns from which the music is generated. They also suggest that while there was a refinement of the composer's methods during the 1970s, this did not amount to his abandoning the technique he had established during the preceding decade. Consequently, the stylistic changes which have occurred in Maxwell Davies's music have taken place at the creative stage, rather than the mechanical phase of the compositional process, and this is where Mackay Brown's influence has had an impact.

The Second Symphony clearly reflects the environment in which it was composed, especially the sea, and this is in

accordance with Paul Driver's observation concerning the  
finale of its predecessor.<sup>12</sup> This is undoubtedly a legacy of  
Mackay Brown, whose writings have encouraged the composer to  
identify with all aspects of the Orkney Islands. Mackay  
Brown's texts have also prompted the composer to adopt a more  
detached style, even in his 'abstract' scores. In rejecting  
the more extreme tenets of 'modernism', Maxwell Davies has  
discarded those aspects of 'romanticism' from which they  
sprang, focusing on the 'classicism' of the Austro-German  
'symphonic' composers from the turn of the 18th and 19th  
centuries. The inter-relationships between the different  
'magic squares' shows the degree of integration that had been  
achieved by the Second Symphony, and Maxwell Davies has  
placed even greater emphasis on 'classical' models in his  
subsequent scores. In short, the sketches confirm that the  
simplification of style that has been achieved in response to  
Mackay Brown's influence has given rise to an arithmetical  
formula which is relatively easy to grasp, but has limitless  
permutatory possibilities. This, and the fact that 'magic  
squares' are associated with prehistoric monuments which have  
been enshrined in local folklore, has ensured that the  
author's writings have inspired far more works than those  
directly concerned with his texts.

Notes.

1

The Listener, dated 21st May 1987.

2

Ibid.



<sup>3</sup> J. J. Nattiez (Editor), Translated M. Cooper, 1985, Page 191.

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Docherty: 'Sentence into Cadence: The Word Setting of Tippett and Britten'; Tempo No. 166, September 1988, Pages 2/11.

<sup>5</sup> Maeshowe is constructed in such a way that the sun's rays only penetrate the innermost chamber as it sets on midwinter's day, thereby foreshadowing the coming of spring at the darkest time of the year.

<sup>6</sup> See also S. Pruslin: 'One if by Land, Two if by Sea': Maxwell Davies the Symphonist'; Tempo No. 153, 1985, Pages 2/6.

<sup>7</sup> P. Owens: Paper delivered to the Royal Musical Research Association, December 1984.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> R. Howat, 1983, Page 193. Moreover, the composer's programme note for the Third Symphony confirms the significance he has attached to the proportional systems used in the construction of Italian Renaissance churches: '. . . The theories of Brunelleschi, Alberti, Piero Della Francesca and Leonardo, in the first instance made available via Rudolf Wittkower's essays, together with a lot of time experiencing the buildings themselves, have influenced the tonal-modal thinking in this work. It should also be mentioned at the outset that theories of 'vanishing points' have influenced my thinking about the function of the musical tonic, and of

its immediate relations, throughout and, by implication, not only all rhythmic definition on large and small scale, but tonality-defining harmonic progression as well, over large time spans, and in smallest detail'. Although these remarks refer specifically to the Third Symphony, it is clear from a perusal of Wittkower's Principles of Architecture in the Age of Humanism that many aspects of Italian Renaissance architectural theory would be of lasting interest to Maxwell Davies, notably the influence of religious symbolism, and its links with music theory. Concerning the former, the centrally planned Church was derived from the Pythagorean and Platonic concept, 'all is number', which was regarded by the Catholic Church as implying that 'the universe and all creation' was mathematically and harmonically Constructed, including the correspondence between microcosm and macrocosm (see Wittkower, 1962, Pages 27/32). Music was considered to be the audible expression of 'cosmic order', so that the proportions of Renaissance architecture were based on the Pythagorean ratios -  $1/2$  = an octave;  $2/3$  = a fifth, etc. Observing the link between musical intervals and architectural proportions, Alberti stated: 'the numbers by means of which the agreement of sounds affects our ears with delight are the very same which please our eyes and our minds' (Wittkower, Page 110), and the same principle was applied to the other visual arts (see also Wittkower,

Pages 117/126 and 132/142). It need hardly be added that Maxwell Davies has been primarily interested in largescale proportions, which have influenced his harmonic thinking over extended time-spans and his organization of 'symphonic' structure.

10

S. Pruslin (Editor), 1979, Page 87.

11

P. Griffiths, 1982, 2, Page 126.

12

P. Driver: Preview of British Premiere of Symphony No.

2; 'Prom Talk', B.B.C. Radio 3, 19th July, 1981.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### 'Defamiliarization'.

This chapter should be read in conjunction with Appendix 2.

In Chapter 3, reference was made to David Roberts's observation that Revelation and Fall was based on the same material as parts of Taverner, and if the extreme gestures in both works are regarded in terms of 'defamiliarization', as well as parody, it is possible to establish a more fundamental link at the conceptual, as opposed to the merely technical level. The alienating features of Revelation and Fall - the extreme amplification, the lectern, the nun's red habit - have already been mentioned, together with the fact that the theatrical aspects of Maxwell Davies's setting underline the religious symbolism of the text. Yet besides creating a distancing effect, the vivid colours and the violent gestures implied by the vocal amplification also allude to the demonic element in the poem and it is at this level that a link can be established with Taverner.

In the opera, the introduction of parody, especially the diabolic aspect associated with the figure of the Jester/Death in Act I scene 4 and Act II Scene 1, is usually interpreted as symbolizing the distortion of religious

'truth', exacerbated by the advent of the Reformation. However, if these scenes are considered from the standpoint of deconstructive criticism, including the use of estrangement techniques, a great deal more is implied. It becomes clear that the Devil is the excluded opposite in Christian dogma, both Catholic and Protestant, but that his 'works' - heresy, superstition, witchcraft, etc. - are integral to both ideologies. In short, the significance of God as a 'first principle' is entirely dependent on the existence of the Devil, who functions 'as the image of what he is not, and therefore as an essential reminder of what he is'.<sup>1</sup>

The use of 'defamiliarization' in Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé' also serves a religious purpose - to emphasize the extent to which the origins of Christianity are dependent upon Judas's act of betrayal. Yet the increasingly distorted and fragmented account of the Last Supper reflects only one facet of the composer's intentions in the work. The juxtaposition of the modal 'L'Homme Armé' melody with his own compositional techniques exemplifies many of his comments about the limitations of the post-war avant-garde while suggesting a link between the doctrinal disputes of the Reformation, which led to the fragmentation of the Christian Church, and the dogmatic pronouncements of the advocates of total serialism, resulting in a similar fragmentation of compositional styles. The allusions to different periods of

music history, influenced by James Joyce's use of the technique of 'gigantism' in the 'Cyclops' episode of Ulysses, extends this principle, especially as the interpolation of different literary styles into the narrative also has a 'defamiliarizing' effect.

In Vesalii Icones, the presentation of the Stations of the Cross as a dance sequence, based on Vesalius's anatomical drawings, illustrates the distinction between 'defamiliarization' and parody in Maxwell Davies's work. Besides the fact that the transformation of the Vesalius engravings into dance functions as a metaphor, not unlike Mackay Brown's use of the agricultural cycle in his poem, Stations of the Cross, the music and dance 'defamiliarize' one another in that they represent different 'systems' which conflict with each other so that each is thrown into more vivid relief. The effect is enhanced by the division of the music into different styles in which parody plays a significant role. In short, the element of parody links Vesalii Icones with the immediately surrounding works, whereas the manner in which the idea of 'defamiliarization' is employed tends to prefigure some of the works influenced by the writings of George Mackay Brown.

St Thomas Wake exhibits similar characteristics insofar as there are elements of parody in both the orchestral and dance band material, but that at a deeper level, the two

styles represent apparently opposing 'systems' of musical and even cultural values. Thus, because both styles are derived from the same source, the work foreshadows the composer's use of estrangement techniques both as a means of social criticism, as well the more poetic concept of 'defamiliarization' mentioned by Eagleton in his discussion<sup>2</sup> of Yury Lotman's contribution to literary theory. With regard to the former, Maxwell Davies has suggested that it is part of the composer's function to oppose the ruling establishment, since art is, by nature, subversive. Concerning the latter, he has observed that it is possible to juxtapose even traditional ideas, to create a relationship which had not existed hitherto, so that although the ideas are perfectly expressible in everyday language, their conjunction produces a sum total which is far greater than it would seem. This is an important characteristic of some of Britten's music, exemplifying an essentially 'classical' outlook which Maxwell Davies increasingly shares. In seeking a balance with the 'romantic' concept of the subversive artist and applying these considerations to his own music, Maxwell Davies has benefited from Mackay Brown's example, irrespective of whether or not the works concerned have been based on the author's texts, or whether Mackay Brown would endorse some aspects of the composer's social criticism.

Although Mackay Brown has employed estrangement devices (see Alan Bold, Page 106), there is no evidence that his

interpretation of the notion of 'defamiliarization' has been influenced by the methods of post-structuralist criticism. Nevertheless, besides drawing on the more poetic examples of 'defamiliarization' in Mackay Brown's oeuvre, Maxwell Davies has used the technique to modify certain texts, thereby giving them greater social impact. The conversational tone of the selected texts has almost certainly simplified their musical or theatrical adaptation, and the colloquial style of much of Mackay Brown's writing has been reflected in the composer's own texts, including the libretto of Resurrection, where the interpretative problems associated with the 'modernist' poetry he was attempting to set in the 1960s have been avoided.

Accordingly, where the element of 'defamiliarization' is already strongly evident in Mackay Brown's original, Maxwell Davies has either chosen not to set the passage concerned, or has done so without adding any features which might create a further estranging effect. An example of the former is that when the composer adapted parts of A Spell for Greencorn for his song-cycle, The Blind Fiddler, he concentrated exclusively on the 'Notebook' attributed to Storm Kolson, rather than the play itself, with its unusually strong inclinations towards parody, including the use of estrangement techniques in the final scene. The 'defamiliarizing' effect of the ritual of the Last Supper re-enacted in the Social Security tent would have created



similar problems to those encountered by Maxwell Davies in his 'expressionist' scores, and the same is true of the subsequent resurrection sequence, associated with the breaking of the last fiddle string (see Chapter 2). Likewise, the extent to which the Passion story and the rituals of agriculture were integrated in Stations of the Cross dictated a style in which all extraneous elements were rigorously excluded from Maxwell Davies's setting, and they also showed the composer that the notion of 'defamiliarization' was not necessarily associated with fragmentation.

As a result, Maxwell Davies's 'Orkney' works have displayed two apparently conflicting, though ultimately related trends, in which the idea of estrangement, suitably modified by Mackay Brown's influence, has played a significant role. On the one hand, the possibility of stylistic integration preoccupied him in works written during the early phase of the 'Orkney' period. On the other, the realization of this objective encouraged the composer to incorporate a wider range of stylistic influences, with particular reference to folk music and popular forms. Stone Litany exemplifies the first characteristic. The fact that Ann Loomis Silsbee did not appear to have access to the complete sketches meant that she was unable to identify the two plainsong fragments which form the basis of Stone Litany, yet she recognized the work employed two *canti firmi*, and there were important

differences in the way individual sections were composed. As already mentioned (Chapter 1), this prompted Silsbee to apply both set analysis and tonal analysis to her study of the work, and although each revealed valuable insights, the overall result is not completely conclusive (see Silsbee, Page 225). If, however, Stone Litany had been considered in relation to Lotman's concept of 'defamiliarization', it would have been realized that an exact correspondence between the chord structures, based on intervalic relationships, and tonal centres was not intended. It is an example of combining different ideas in unexpected ways. It also points to a possible explanation of features of other works for which conventional analysis has failed to provide a satisfactory account.

In Chapter 3, reference was made to the fact that David Roberts had questioned the notion of 'modulators', which Michael Taylor had introduced in his discussion of Vesalii Icones, but the concept reappears in Silsbee's analysis of Stone Litany, where it is associated with transformations of the cantus firmus material in some of the sections, for example, the sixth movement.

It is likely that some kind of modifying principle is to be found in other works. In Black Pentecost, the larger of the 'magic squares' seems to fulfil this function, since most of the thematic material appears to be derived from the 6 x 6

'square'. It is notable that where more than one 'square' is involved (Symphony No. 2 is another example), they are differently constituted in terms of size, as well as the symmetrical patterns to which they give rise. Accordingly, they are capable of subjecting the same material to conflicting sequences of transformations, so that from the composer's standpoint, it is the arbitrary manner in which the two 'systems' modify each other, rather than any pre-determined formal procedure, whose principles can be fully analysed, that stimulates the creative process. Moreover, while this aspect of 'defamiliarization' functions at the compositional level, Black Pentecost includes an example of estrangement whose dramatic impact is undeniable. This is the abrupt transition at the end of what the composer designates as the 'first movement' (though the work is continuous) when the work is transformed from a 'symphony' into a cantata of protest. Sudden changes of style within the 'cantata', including a satirical episode in which the solo baritone is required to sing falsetto, sustain the effect throughout the vocal sections, though it should be stressed that the form of alienation attempted by Maxwell Davies bears little resemblance to the 'objective' approach associated with Brecht, since the intention is to arouse sympathy for the island community, rather than to create a 'debate'. In this respect, Mackay Brown's text is presented far more dramatically than in the original novel.

Another work in which the social implications of a Mackay Brown text are substantially developed is The Two Fiddlers. Unusually for the composer, considerable liberties are taken with the original story, but he has retained the spirit of the closing paragraph, where Mackay Brown laments the virtual disappearance of such folk tales, so that although the islanders 'are rich, now . . . they have love, and birth, and death, and fruition explained to them in newspapers, coldly, . . . and Storm, and his music, have long since vanished' (The Two Fiddlers, Page 224). Besides dramatizing the salient events of the story and taking advantage of the musical opportunities inherent in the tale by incorporating a series of fiddle dances, he satirizes some of the most familiar features of contemporary culture. A somewhat mocking account is provided of Gavin's conventional progress from youth into comparative old age, complete with all the cliches of a 'successful' career, illustrated by cardboard cut-outs. The tone is ironic, evincing a critical attitude to bourgeois values including the fact that a uniform outlook has superseded all forms of individual expression. Above all, the composer condemns the effects of rampant commercialism, suggesting that the influence of the trolls, whose domination is signified by a sequence of advertising placards placed in the screen of an outsized television, is comparable to that of the unseen authorities who were responsible for the demise of the island community in Black Pentecost. In both instances, the structure of society is

undermined by bourgeois ideology, a theme Maxwell Davies has pursued in The No. 11 Bus and Resurrection, and the use in The Two Fiddlers of cut-outs and placards to symbolize these values, and also as estrangement devices, has been substantially developed in the new opera. The 'advertisements' are associated with one of several musical styles employed in The Two Fiddlers, and the composer has also developed this feature in his subsequent works of social criticism. In this connection, the use of popular styles has been of considerable importance.

Despite various modifications to the composer's choice of popular materials, this aspect provides one of the strongest links between the works of the 1960s and their successors of the 'Orkney' period. Besides their 'defamiliarizing' potential, popular forms have fulfilled a number of functions in Maxwell Davies's output. In Revelation and Fall, they were intended to evoke the decadence of the era prior to the first World War; in St Thomas Wake, they were associated with the revival of two 'dead' dance forms; familiar styles of hymnody were regarded as popular material in Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé' and Vesalii Icones; and more recently, Orcadian folk tunes have been incorporated without any suggestion of parody in an effort to revive a lost musical tradition. In this sense, Maxwell Davies has sought to blur the distinction between 'popular' forms and so-called 'concert music', adapting any stylistic feature to his

purpose, irrespective of its provenance.

His deployment of popular material has invariably been designed to give a flavour of the society and culture with which the work concerned was associated (for example, the 'dance music' 'accompanying' the Court scenes in Taverner). Consequently, there has always been an intimate connection between entertainment music and the basic themes with which he has been preoccupied. During the 'Orkney' period, however, the composer's perspective has undergone a decisive change, for instead of focusing on the past, he has increasingly concentrated on contemporary society. Accordingly, in recent years, nowhere is the element of continuity more clearly exemplified than in the scores designed as vehicles for his social observations.

However, whether the composer's attempts, in The No. 11 Bus and Resurrection, to transfer his attention from specific problems associated with the local community to society in general have been successful will be considered in Chapter 8, with particular reference to Resurrection. Having already seen that many of Maxwell Davies's works tend to support Eagleton's thesis concerning the collapse of bourgeois values, the text of the opera will be discussed as a contemporary illustration of Thomas Mann's analysis of the demise of 'humanist' culture.

## Notes

1

T. Eagleton, 1983, Page 102.

2

D. Lodge, 1988, Pages 167/172.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Resurrection: The Genesis of the Opera; The Debt to Doktor Faustus; The Legacy of Mackay Brown.

#### Section 1: The Genesis of the Opera.

Peter Maxwell Davies has stated that the outline of Resurrection was originally conceived in 1963.<sup>1</sup> At the end of the libretto, he has written that the text was completed in 1981 with revisions in July/August 1983 and December 1985/January 1986. Thus the work spans all the major orchestral and music-theatre scores of the 1960s, as well as the compositions of the 'Orkney' period, including those based on the writings of George Mackay Brown. The composer has acknowledged that all these works, especially the most substantial music-theatre projects, have contributed to different aspects of Resurrection, both technical and thematic. The character of the opera also reflects some important extra-musical influences stemming from Maxwell Davies's experience as Director of the St Magnus Festival, Orkney, and the Dartington Music Summer School. The chief protagonist is a dummy, the techniques by which he is operated probably being derived from Barry Smith's Theatre of Puppets, who were at the St Magnus Festival in 1979, and Dartington Summer School in 1981. The stage action is equally indebted to the 'In Triplicate' Mime Company, who appeared in the 1981 St Magnus Festival, and particularly the



Theatre de Complicite, who participated in the 1984 and 1985 Festivals. They illustrated the immense power of non-verbal theatre, creating a show which explored several of the composer's most persistent themes: 'The comedy has all the characteristics of childhood games - the closeness of the players, the sharing of rules, the pleasures of conspiracy. As well as being in a state of involvement with each other, they try to get closer to the audience, so that were the roof to collapse, it would just become a part of the game they are playing. The new show, 'A Minute too late', centres around an undertaker's assistant and is set in a funeral parlour with eccentric and comic characters. Their interest is always in people who are out of step, out of time, who have missed the bus, or got off at the wrong stop . . . .'<sup>2</sup>

An important facet of the conspiratorial aspect of music-theatre is that the genre provides 'a marvellous chance for taking the audience along and making them react in a certain way and then going behind that reaction and making them see that they have acted wrongly . . . my intention is to do something in each of these music-theatre works which is presenting images in a way that is going to provoke the audience . . . . After all, this is, on my part, a reaction against the sort of contemporary music audience reaction (where) there is not much interplay between musicians and audience . . . people will accept any harmony, any melodic gesture or their absence, and it has become very jaded indeed

and frightfully establishment'. Puppets afford an unusually effective method of achieving this objective in that they can convey the more gruesome features of a narrative in a way that audiences would find unacceptable in terms of conventional theatre. They can also be operated at considerable speed and with great precision, and Maxwell Davies has expressed an interest in the discrepancy that often arises from the fact that even when dealing with 'serious' subjects, puppets are frequently accompanied by trite music. The use of a mime or dancers can have an equally 'defamiliarizing' effect, generally associated with comedy, but increasingly important to the composer as a means of exploring serious issues: 'I wanted to do something which . . . put across a point of view . . . I wanted to communicate directly. It is something quite apart from music; after all, one can't say those things in absolute . . . music, and more recently I have even had to make my own texts entirely, so that I can put this across. I see music and music-theatre as forces for moral instruction. This is, perhaps, a Victorian attitude towards it, but I think we need moral instruction about all sorts of things which we might take for granted. Issues of good masquerading as evil, and evil masquerading as good, of the duality of Christ and Antichrist . . . these are moral issues which I think are quite fundamental to one's understanding of the phenomenon of civilization . . . and they certainly make very theatrical events inside operas or music-theatre works if one brings

them out in such a way that the audience is made to ponder<sup>4</sup> questions by shock tactics and by dramatic presentation'.

The limited acting ability of most musicians and their unwillingness to commit themselves to a great deal of extra-musical activity, possibly involving ludicrous situations, is another factor. Consequently, while the members of the Fires of London were encouraged to participate in the farcical aspects of both Le Jongleur de Notre Dame and The No. 11 Bus, the addition of a juggler in the former and a mime and two dancers in the latter, indicated the composer's increasing need for acting roles which could not be allocated even to the singer. Resurrection does not include a juggler or mime, but in all other respects it extends these principles by blending the farcical with the sinister in such a way as to make some very serious comments about features of contemporary society which are either ignored or accepted without question. Another element of the opera involves allusions to Greek mythology, and to the religious symbolism of the Reformation, particularly Albrecht Durer's 24 woodcuts of the Apocalypse of St John the Divine. With the exception of the dummy, which represents 'an unsmart boy of 16' in the Prologue and the patient in the Main Act, all the participants, both singers and dancers, perform multiple roles, some of which require masks. Many of the transformations which the boy/patient undergoes during the course of the work are reflected as much by visual symbolism

as in the music.

The libretto indicates that the various forms of theatrical presentation are matched by an equivalent variety of musical styles. Accordingly, although Resurrection addresses many important social issues, all suggestions of 'realism' are avoided. Thus the stage action is one means by which Maxwell Davies pre-empts the perennial question: 'why should anyone sing what can perfectly well be spoken?'.<sup>5</sup> The opera re-works some of the ideas presented in Taverner, yet there is no longer any hint of a linear plot, nor is there a conflict between the need to dramatize familiar historical events and the equally powerful impulse to present 'in theatrical terms . . . what is essentially a private internal crisis'.<sup>6</sup> As a result, the attempt to dispense with any sense of continuity in the earlier opera is carried much further in Resurrection.

In this connection, the influence of George Mackay Brown can be discerned, for besides the fact that the use of 'flashbacks' is one of the hallmarks of his style, continuity is frequently suspended in both his novels and many of his short stories. Structurally, Resurrection is comparable with The Lighthouse, which though not based directly on the writings of Mackay Brown, uses a text by the composer containing many of the author's most recognizable characteristics. Each has a Prologue and Main Act, and the transition to the latter involves a radical change of

perspective. The use of 'adverts' is another feature developed from a Mackay Brown inspired work. In The Two Fiddlers, (see Chapter 7), Maxwell Davies used this idea, represented by a series of cardboard cut-outs and accompanied by a sequence of 'jingles', to illustrate the author's allegorical re-working of a traditional Orkney folk-tale. In the opera, this feature is developed into one of the basic elements of the work's overall structure. Because Resurrection does not depend on conventional 'narrative', the multiple viewpoint is not applicable in the manner in which it appears in Mackay Brown's fiction, where the salient events are outlined from several different standpoints; yet amidst the various theatrical and stylistic transformations, the 'adverts' operate on their own distinctive level throughout the opera, and this is emphasized by the fact that they are allocated their own acting area in the shape of a raised platform which should bear some resemblance to a television screen. As such, they fulfil a significant unifying function, not least because they interrupt the stage action at sufficiently regular intervals to impose their own time-scale. Their derivation from the Book of Revelations indicates that they are conceived in terms of parody 'chorales', interpolating appropriate 'commentaries's in a familiar style (as in a Passion setting), in this instance demonstrating the extent to which social fragmentation and alienation are caused by unbridled commercialism. The 'commercials' are sung by a vocal quartet whose sounds are

electronically distorted, thereby contributing to the element of parody, and probably creating a disembodied effect, as the group are situated in the pit. In the Prologue, another level of the action is devoted to the cat - a dancing role - whose gradual transformation into a dragon is symbolized by a sequence of increasingly civilized masks. His function is analogous to that of Jester/Death in Taverner, and in the Main Act, his role is taken over by the 'double of the dummy' (patient), who is portrayed by the same dancer. His appearances in the Main Act are restricted to the mime number, Television Commercial 23, and the concluding resurrection sequence. Yet there are sufficient correspondences with the Prologue to indicate that the cat's controlling influence is pervasive throughout.<sup>7</sup> Not the least of these is the fact that one of the levels which constitute the Main Act consists of a sequence in which all the characters of the Prologue reappear.

Finally, the language is either colloquial or rhetorical, with frequent echoes of the music-hall. The libretto is cast primarily in rhymed couplets and there are no suggestions of 'modernism'. The text is liberally sprinkled with the sort of clichés that are particularly prevalent in the right wing press. The rhetoric reflects all the currently fashionable authoritarian doctrines - Capitalism, Marxism, Catholicism, Protestantism and Evangelicism of the 'born again' variety. There is also a reference to Jewish authority, but this is

restricted to only one TV Commercial. Despite superficial differences, the underlying meaning of their pronouncements is the same: they all display intolerance and repressive tendencies to those who do not conform to their tenets.

By carefully baulancing the contributions from the representatives of each of the main religious or political 'persuasions', the composer makes it clear that he regards them all as equally responsible for the present condition of society. Nevertheless, the humour also includes jokes referring to aspects of Maxwell Davies's own past, notably the appearance of Zeus (or Hera) with an acoustic wind-up horn gramophone 'which he/she winds up and plays for his or her speech'. The sound is distorted to simulate the quality of an ancient recording, but the humour acquires a sinister character in that as the needle sticks and the 'record' slows down, images of total destruction - 'the ruin of all time and space' - are projected across the stage inferring that the whole of creation is motivated by a gigantic clockwork spring. Throughout the work, this kind of humour, with its disturbing implications, plays a major role in undermining the listener's complacent attitude to the way society is organized. As with the use of puppets, it also enabled the composer to create a 'distancing' effect, allowing him to address fundamental religious questions whose 'subjective' nature generally precludes any serious discussion in an essentially secular context. It is worth noting that at the

conclusion of the prefatory note, the composer refers to Resurrection as a 'play', and this tends to be confirmed by the fact that two of the work's main structural devices are extra-musical. Maxwell Davies states that the 'commercials' are derived from Albrecht Durer's 24 Woodcuts of the Apocalypse of St John, with their appropriate texts in Revelations, while the transformations of the cat allude to the sequence of 16th-century alchemical illustrations in Jung's Alchemical Studies. These correspondences are clearly recognizable in the opera, though they do not follow strictly the order of appearance in either the Durer or the Jung. Concerning the former, the references are to The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Durer, edited by Dr Willi Kirth, Dover Publications Inc., New York, first published in 1963. The plate order is that set forth in the Bartsch Catalogue (see Appendix 3).

It is apparent from the libretto that Maxwell Davies has attempted to create total theatre in order to achieve the maximum impact, culminating in the ultimate gesture of 'defamiliarization' against all forms of imposed ideology. Yet although the more sensational aspects of his approach are absent in his settings of texts by George Mackay Brown, the underlying meaning is often remarkably similar. Both share a fundamental distrust in all forms of 'progress' which promise eventual utopia, and while Mackay Brown would exclude Catholicism from the satirical onslaught to which it is



subjected in Resurrection, his less aggressive approach to artistic expression should not conceal the fact that he has been equally critical of all other ideologies. Coincidentally, a number of Mackay Brown's works end with small groups of people settling in Orkney after escaping from the kind of urban desolation depicted in the final 'commercial' of the opera, as cities are destroyed by 'the dragon'. He has also made use of diabolic elements to illustrate what he regards as the distortion of religious 'truth' by Calvinism (see extract from Master Halcrow, Priest, quoted in Chapter 2), and has drawn on the imagery of Revelations to describe the destructive effects of industrial technology.

Another feature which the text of Resurrection shares with Mackay Brown's writings is the juxtaposition of fantastic events with elements of 'realism', and the recurring patterns of imagery and symbolism give the libretto a poetic dimension. This is enhanced by the way the opposing forces of good and evil are balanced against one another, and the allusions to the illustrations in Alchemical Studies emphasize the significance of such a balance in pre-Reformation culture.

## Section 2 - The Debt to Doktor Faustus.

Two major 20th-century novels - Ulysses and Doktor Faustus -

have exercised a lasting influence on Maxwell Davies because of their concern with the relationship of the creative artist to society. In this context, Mackay Brown's less ambitious fiction can be seen as having equal significance for the composer, not only because it has portrayed characters who fit uneasily into society, but also because he has avoided the irreconcilable paradoxes associated with 'modernism' which have affected the work of James Joyce and Thomas Mann. All three have explored similar themes against a background of events whose selection was designed to encourage recognition amongst particular groups of readers, and while Joyce and Mann have established unassailable international reputations, especially in academic circles, it is possible that, within his local community, Mackay Brown has appealed to a readership drawn from a wider spectrum of society. By contrast, the productions of Joyce and Mann have become the subject of increasingly esoteric study, so that notwithstanding their immense creative achievement, their impact on society in general has been minimal. On the one hand, this is symptomatic of the fact that 'bourgeois romanticism' has lost <sup>8</sup> 'confidence in the public's intellectual power'. On the other, it reflects the determination of bourgeois culture to emphasize those aspects of literature which are amenable to 'objective' study, especially if they can also be adduced as upholding the notion of 'progress', while playing down those features which challenge or undermine the prevailing ideology.

Allied to this is the fact that neither Ulysses, nor Doktor Faustus fits comfortably into the mainstream of British literature, whose narrative tradition is generally non-symbolic and is not primarily concerned with 'abstract' ideas. Its basis is empirical and practical, rather than spiritual, and this attitude exerts a powerful influence over all aspects of British culture, including music. 'Reality' is regarded as concrete, and consequently, easily verifiable. As such, it can be related to the idea of an 'objective' analysis, whereas metaphysical speculations, or attempts to explore the sub-conscious, are relegated to a subsidiary realm.

Thus, considerations of literary technique tend to dominate discussions of Ulysses, while Doktor Faustus has generally been regarded as an attempt to elucidate the complexities of the creative process. Far less attention is paid to the fact that both novels in different ways encompass the central problems that have dominated Western culture throughout the present century: the increasing difficulty of distinguishing 'reality' from 'appearance'; 'truth' from 'falsity'; the fragmentation of society (symbolized in Ulysses by the disjunction between the various layers of narrative). In Doktor Faustus, Thomas Mann postulates that the disintegration of the Austro-German tradition was temporarily suspended only by recourse to the evil of

National Socialism. Leverkühn's pact with the devil, guaranteeing him a fixed term of immense musical creativity followed by the collapse of his mental faculties and subsequent demise, was conceived as an allegory for the advent of the third Reich, the resulting exposure of humanity's capacity for ultimate evil, and the final destruction of Nazism. Despite other attempts to account for the enormities of National Socialism and the involvement of many cultivated individuals in its worst excesses, several commentators have detected a 'conspiracy of silence' amongst the purveyors of post-war bourgeois culture. They argue that the growing tendency to make 'reality', itself, taboo in order to avoid questioning the validity of affirmative bourgeois values has prevented society recognizing the evil in its midst.

The problem is that the capacity of bourgeois culture to absorb the most extreme forms of expression have made it increasingly difficult to register any kind of effective protest. More than two decades before Terry Eagleton, Roland Barthes observed that 'the bourgeoisie delegated some of its creators to tasks of formal subversion without actually<sup>9</sup> disinheriting them', and T. W. Adorno stated that it was the duty of the 'serious' contemporary composer to espouse 'the cause of the free individual repressed by the 'managed' society of East and West alike. Serious music must nowadays be difficult and disagreeable, for charm and pleasure have

become means to make men into docile consumers. Not only popular music, but the use made of serious music by the 'culture industry' . . . encourage regression to an infantile condition'.<sup>10</sup>

In responding to the situation outlined by Barthes and Adorno, Maxwell Davies has attempted to avoid the charge of elitism which might be levelled at a composer of 'difficult' music. Part of his strategy has involved turning the 'weapons' of the 'culture industry' against itself, though the idea of basing Resurrection on a sequence of advertising captions may also have been stimulated by Mr Bloom's links with advertising. Throughout his career, the composer has tended to identify with characters who embody ideas concerning the nature of the creative process, or the relationship of the artist to society. These characters, both historical and fictional, have been composers, writers, or religious figures, invariably united by a refusal to accept the 'received' notion of 'reality'. Even when Mackay Brown's texts are not being employed, his presence can be discerned as a fellow protagonist in the struggle against the purveyors of an authoritarian or ideological interpretation of 'reality'. Both have been particularly critical of the humanist tradition, and while Mackay Brown's criticism has concentrated on evoking Medieval Orkney society as an 'ideal' against which to measure the progressive decline of post-Reformation civilization, he is, perhaps, alone among

contemporary British writers in consistently providing a basis from which the implications of such a standpoint can be more thoroughly explored. In this connection, he can be regarded as a 'bridge' to the Central European literary tradition where, in the novels of Thomas Mann and others, these ideas have been developed in terms of the whole of European society, rather than the difficulties of a small island community trying to preserve its identity.

The importance of Doktor Faustus in the context of Maxwell Davies's oeuvre is that Zeitblom and Leverkühn represent attitudes broadly comparable with the Austro-German and Medieval/Renaissance traditions which Maxwell Davies has sought to reconcile. The symphonies and concertos stem from what might loosely be termed the 'Zeitblom' end of the spectrum, while works involving a text generally incline towards Leverkühn's standpoint. In the former, Maxwell Davies's function is analogous to that of an 'establishment' composer, but increasingly modified to reflect his growing preoccupation with 'classical' forms, as exemplified in the music of the late 18th-century, as well as the role developed by Haydn and his contemporaries at the European Courts and within the wider community. In this last respect, Maxwell Davies has adopted an increasingly critical attitude to the 'establishment', but he has generally succeeded in obtaining commissions which ensured that the resulting work would not be restricted to a single isolated performance: at first, by

creating a substantial and varied repertoire, including music-theatre and small-scale opera, for his own ensembles, more recently, through a scheme which is intended to produce an equally large and wide-ranging body of music for the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, linked to an educational project organized by the Strathclyde Authority. Consequently, as Maxwell Davies has rejected 19th-century 'romantic' notions of the composer's role in society, he has placed greater emphasis on the 18th-century model of the symphony, based on tonal conflict, rather than the 19th-century concept, in which thematic contrast was given precedence. Concerning those works which incline towards Leverkuhn's interpretation of artistic 'truth', the situation is complicated by the fact that the hero of Doktor Faustus was a product of the humanist tradition. Moreover, few contemporary composers would countenance Adorno's belief on the necessity for them to concentrate on writing 'difficult' music, nor would they deny the cultural significance of popular music and jazz. In short, Adorno's belief that the genuinely progressive composer needed to work in order to avoid being 'corrupted' by establishment values has lost much of its credibility. By stressing the need for the creative artist to communicate, Maxwell Davies has questioned another aspect of the 'romantic' notion, of the composer as a misunderstood individual, or a subversive 'outsider'. Leverkuhn embodies several of these characteristics, and his pact with the devil can be interpreted as an extension of the 'romantic' concept

of the artist who sacrifices everything to the full expression of his creative imagination. Yet his importance for Maxwell Davies stems from the idea that music might develop independently of humanist culture. As a result of 20th-century history, Zeitblom's objection - that any alternative would amount to barbarism - has lost its validity. Mann's theme, that the crisis within the arts is symptomatic of a much wider crisis, resulting from 'an excess of knowledge',<sup>11</sup> has underpinned most of the Mackay Brown texts Maxwell Davies has set to music, but it is the diabolical aspect of Doktor Faustus, in conjunction with the references to Durer's Apocalypse, which have prompted Maxwell Davies to reinterpret the nihilistic elements of the Book of Revelations in contemporary terms.

Accordingly, Maxwell Davies endorses Thomas Mann's conclusion<sup>12</sup> that the language of bourgeois art has 'become dishonest'. Besides illustrating 'Mann's intention . . . to summon up the pre-humanist world when the devil was last a living reality', the passage from Pages 238/243 of the Lowe-Porter translation outlines many of the problems encountered by the composer in a manner Maxwell Davies has echoed in his writings. Ultimately, as Gabriel Josipovici has observed in his discussion of Taverner, Maxwell Davies is concerned with 'the propensity of man to succumb to his own devils and to turn on the father and destroy him in an act which is very close to self-destruction. The refusal to recognize any authority and



the recognition of the suicidal nature of such a refusal.'

This is the essence of Leverkühn's pact, and one of the most persuasive arguments advanced by the Devil, which would undoubtedly appeal to Maxwell Davies, is that 'Barbarism ... has more grasp of theology than has a culture fallen away from cult, which even in the religious has seen only culture, only the humane, never excess, paradox, the mystic passion, the utterly unbourgeois ordeal. I hope you do not marvel that 'the Great Adversary' speaks to you of religion . . . . Who else, I should like to know, is to speak of it today? Surely not the liberal theologian! After all I am by now its sole custodian! In whom will you recognize theological existence if not in me? And who can lead to a theological existence without me? The religious is certainly my line: as certainly as it is not the line of bourgeois culture. Since culture fell away from cult and made a cult of itself, it has become nothing else than a falling away; and all the world after a mere 500 years is as sick and tired of it as though . . . they had ladled it in with cooking spoons' (Doktor Faustus, Page 243). Hardly less persuasive is the Devil's musical prowess: 'You might even so value me as an expert. The Devil ought to know something about music. If I mistake not, you were reading just now in a book by the Christian in love with aesthetics. He knew and understood my particular relation to this beautiful art - the most Christian of all arts, he finds - but Christian in reverse,

as it were: introduced and developed by Christianity indeed, but then rejected and banned as the Devil's kingdom - so there you are. A highly theological business, music - the way sin is, the way I am. The passion of that Christian for music is true passion, and as such knowledge and corruption in one. For there is true passion only in the ambiguous and ironic. The highest passion concerns the absolutely unquestionable . . . . No, musical I am indeed, don't worry about that. I have sung you the role of poor Judas because of the difficulties into which music like everything else has got today. Should I not have done so? But I did it only to point out to you that you should break through them, that you should lift yourself above them to giddy heights of self-admiration, and do such things you will behold them with shudders of awe.' (Doktor Faustus, Page 242).

The sense of Maxwell Davies's identification with Leverkühn's compositional objectives is strengthened by the fact that in Taverner and Resurrection, he has attempted to fulfil the promise given to the fictional composer as he progressed towards the culmination of his career: 'Not only will you break through the paralysing difficulties of the time - you will break through time itself, by which I mean the cultural epoch and its cult, and dare to be barbaric, twice barbaric indeed, because of coming after the humane, after all the possible bourgeois raffinement.' (Doktor Faustus, Page 243). Accordingly, Maxwell Davies has no scruples about the

inclusion of elements of 'bad taste', or the introduction of controversial subject-matter, such as madness or disease; above all, the use of parody.

Many commentators will interpret this as a reversion to the composer's style of the 1960s, but this fails to take account of the stylistic changes which have occurred as a consequence of setting texts by Mackay Brown. In these settings, Maxwell Davies has been much more selective in his application of parody, to the point where it is no longer an essential feature of his style. In addition, the use of parody in the Mackay Brown-inspired works has been directed towards a somewhat different purpose. It reflects the fact that although Mackay Brown has been critical of humanist culture, his perspective has been that of preserving the identity of a small community, in which elements of an older tradition can still be discerned, or at least recalled. On the other hand, Maxwell Davies's preoccupation with society in general, particularly the problems of the contemporary artist attempting to reconcile the tenets of 'modernism' with the need to communicate to a wide audience, has ensured that his criticism has a much sharper focus. Furthermore, his focus has been clarified as a consequence of setting Mackay Brown texts, so that insofar as it develops the fundamental theme of Taverner, Resurrection involves a return to parody with greater vigour, and more precisely directed than previously. Hence Josipovici's discussion of this question in

the context of the earlier opera is even more pertinent to its successor: 'Parody is the assertion of the primacy of process over product, of the ultimate freedom of man, in the face of destruction and despair: the purely human freedom to articulate. In Puritan England, the Jester/Death triumphs, and music is destroyed. In Henry's England, the Jester triumphs and Taverner denies his creative impulses, dries up, turns informer, and then butcher. Id and superego triumph over ego, and the opera ends with Taverner falling 'prostrate before the pyre' to which he has condemned his fellow human beings. But on the stage . . . the dramatization of the triumph of death the Jester becomes the triumph of life and art. Antichrist, obscenely grinning, moves into the centre of the stage, but the dramatization of Antichrist is the triumph, if not of Christ, then at least of that creative principle of which Christ, according to Rose Parrowe, is the root . . . . The articulation of the hero's failure, despair and disintegration, reveals the ultimate triumph of art, of the human over the inanimate . . . .'<sup>14</sup> Josipovici adds that such a triumph is characteristic of much of the art of the 20th-century, and there is no doubt that Thomas Mann envisaged Adrian Leverkühn as contributing further examples.

In view of the extent to which Resurrection is based on the Book of Revelations, together with Durer's visual reinterpretation, and Maxwell Davies long-standing affinity with the chief protagonist of Doktor Faustus, it is

inevitable that comparison should be made with Mann's imaginative description of Leverkuhn's Apocalipsis Cum Figuris, though this does not imply that he has attempted a compositional 'realization' of the work outlined in the novel. Thus Mann draws a connection between Leverkuhn's inexorable progress towards the abandonment of tonality, his need to formulate an alternative, equally expressive musical 'language', and the equally difficult task of 'rescuing' bourgeois society from its final stages of decline. The fact that the composer can no longer rely on a 'generally applicable technique',<sup>15</sup> so that 'composing becomes a technical puzzle . . . rather than spontaneous expression',<sup>16</sup> symbolizes the corruption of humanist values. The old artistic and social conventions have collapsed under the pressure of subjectivity.

Apocalipsis Cum Figuris, together with the Faust Cantata, form the culmination of Leverkuhn's response to these issues. At the technical level, some of the details suggest a curious parallel with Maxwell Davies's development, though again it must be stressed that this is likely to have encouraged Maxwell Davies's identification with the aesthetic viewpoint of Mann's protagonist, rather than any notion of applying them in terms of compositional procedures. Nevertheless, the number of references, and their similarity to Maxwell Davies's outlook cannot be ignored.

Page 92 of the novel contains the following passage: 'On the wall above the piano was an arithmetical diagram fastened with drawing pins, something he had found in a second-hand shop: the so-called magic square, such as appears also in Durer's Melancolia, along with the hour-glass, the circle, the scale, the polyhedron, and other symbols. Here as there, the figure was divided into sixteen Arabic-numbered fields, in such a way that No 1 was written in the right-hand lower corner, 16 in the upper left; and the magic, or the oddity, simply consisted in the fact that the sum of these numerals, however you added them, straight down, crosswise, or diagonally, always came to 34. What the principle was upon which this magic uniformity rested I never made out, but by virtue of the prominent place Adrian had given it over the piano, it always attracted the eye . . . .'

Later in the novel (Pages 191/194), the species of serial technique outlined by Leverkuhn may have aroused the hostility of Schoenberg because of the extent to which it draws on ideas from the Medieval era. On the other hand, their appeal to Maxwell Davies is self-evident, especially as there are significant links with wider issues. There are references to 'the devices of the old counterpoint', the 'magic square' and pre-composition (Page 192); to 'astrology' and 'rationalism' that 'has a good deal of superstition about it - of belief in the incomprehensibly and vaguely daemonic, the kind of thing we have in games of chance, a

fortune-telling with cards and shaking dice'' (Page 193/194). Above all, Leverkuhn's contention that ''Reason and magic ... may meet and become one in that which one calls wisdom, initiation, belief in the stars, in numbers . . .'' (Page 194), recalls a discussion (Page 90) concerning the relative merits of 'conservative' and 'liberal' theology, in which the former is deemed to have a 'more significant relation to culture' on the grounds that it has greater 'insight into the daemonic character of human existence'.

The libretto of Resurrection owes a good deal to this kind of thinking, summed up in the following: 'Here one sees clearly the infiltration of theological thinking by irrational currents of philosophy, in whose realm, indeed, the non-theoretic, the vital, the will or instinct, in short the daemonic, have long since become the chief theme of theory. At the same time one observes the revival of the study of Catholic Medieval philosophy . . . On these lines, theology, grown sickly with liberalism, can take on deeper and stronger . . . more glowing hues; it can once more do justice to the ancient aesthetic conceptions which are involuntarily associated with its name.' (Page 90). Resurrection is also imbued with what Thomas Mann describes as 'the theologically negative and pitiless character' of Apocalipsis Cum Figuris. Its atmosphere, if not the literal details of the music, matches Leverkuhn's 'frightful chorus of humanity fleeing before the four horsemen . . . the awful scream given

to the mocking, bleating bassoon, the 'wail of the bird'; perhaps that song and answer, like an antiphony . . . the harsh choral fugue to the words of Jeremiah: ' . . . We have transgressed and have rebelled: thou hast not pardoned. Thou hast covered with anger and persecuted us: thou hast slain, thou hast not pitied'', etc. (Page 359/360). There is also a common interest in the 'archaic fugal forms of certain canzoni and ricercari of pre-Bach time'. Finally, the culmination of Resurrection creates an analogous effect to the 'roaring brass passages' mentioned by Mann: 'Heavily scored and widely spaced out, which made one think of an open abyss wherein one must hopelessly sink' (Page 360).

Moreover, Mann places his account of the Apocalipsis Cum Figuris in the context of a 'critique of the bourgeois tradition' in which it was recognized that 'the values of culture, enlightenment, humanity . . . of such dreams as the uplifting of the people through scientific civilization' (Page 365) had led to 'despotic tyranny over the masses; and they, reduced to one uniform level, atomized, out of touch, were as powerless as the single individual' (Page 366). In addition, there was the theory 'that in this age of the masses parliamentary discussion must prove entirely inadequate for the shaping of political decisions; that in its stead the masses would have in the future to be provided with mythical fictions, devised like primitive battle cries, to release and



activate political energies's (Page 366). The slogans in Resurrection, whether those of the advertisements, the ravings of the hot gosseller, or the pronouncements of various figures of authority, are clearly examples of 'mythical fictions', designed to manipulate the masses against their better judgement: 'Fables, insane visions, chimeras, which needed to have nothing to do with the truth or reason or science in order to be creative, to determine the course of life and history, and thus to prove themselves dynamic realities's (Page 366).

The essential difference is that whereas Mann regarded these 'fictions' as the means by which National Socialism undermined 'the bourgeois social order', Mackay Brown and Maxwell Davies now see them as perpetuating bourgeois culture by devaluing both 'truth' and the individual when either appears to threaten the prevailing ideology. It was 'the mocking abyss between truth and power, truth and life, truth and the community' arising from bourgeois culture's attempt to suppress any notion of the existence of evil that led to the advent of Nazism, and its failure to accept the full implications of the Third Reich has contributed to the growing crisis in contemporary society. This is exemplified by bourgeois culture's continuing adherence to the notion of 'progress', which still exerts a powerful influence on the tenets of the avant-garde. Thus, while Adorno diagnosed many of these problems, he was hampered by his belief in

'progress', and by his inability to recognize the similarity between the political left and right. He also appears to have assumed that the Medieval era 'belonged to a superseded and uninteresting world' (Doktor Faustus, Page 368).

Thomas Mann, on the other hand, realized that the limitations of the Medieval world could be beneficial to the creative imagination: ' . . . Precisely because from the very first Medieval man had received a closed intellectual frame from the Church as something absolute and taken for granted, he had been far more imaginative than the burgher of the individualistic age; he had been able to surrender himself far more freely and sure-footedly to his personal fantasy' (Page 369). Accordingly, Apocalipsis Cum Figuris illustrates Leverkuhn's contention that 'the antithesis of bourgeois culture is not barbarism but collectivism' (Page 373), and his revival of ritual music is borne out by the inclusion of 'ensembles which begin as speaking choruses and only by stages, by the way of the most extraordinary transitions, turn into the richest vocal music. Then choruses which pass through all the stages from graded whisperings, antiphonal speech and humming, up to the most polyphonic song, accompanied by sounds which begin as mere noise, like tom-toms and thundering gongs - savage, fanatical, ritual - and end by arriving at the purest music. How often has this intimidating work, in its urge to reveal in the language of music the most hidden things, the beast in man as well as his

sublimest stirrings, incurred the reproach both of blood-boltered barbarism and of bloodless intellectuality! . . . its idea, in a way, is to take in the life-history of music, from its pre-musical, magic, rhythmical, elementary stage to its most complex consummation . . . .’ (Page 374). Finally, in keeping with Apocalipsis Cum Figuris, Resurrection ‘is dominated by the paradox . . . that in it dissonance stands for the expression of everything lofty, solemn, pious, everything of the spirit; while consonance and firm tonality are reserved for the world of hell, in this context, a world of banality and commonplace’ (Page 375). In the work envisaged by Mann, ‘the part of the whore of Babylon, the woman on the beast with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, is surprisingly enough, a most graceful coloratura of great virtuosity. Its brilliant runs blend at times with the orchestra exactly like a flute. On the other hand, the muted trumpet suggests a grotesque vox humana, as does also the saxophone, which plays a conspicuous part in several of the small chamber orchestras which accompany the singing of the devils: the shameful round of song by the sons of the pit. Adrian’s capacity for mocking imitation, which was rooted deep in the melancholy of his being, became creative here in a parody of the different musical styles in which the insipid wantonness of hell indulges: French impressionism is burlesqued, along with bourgeois drawing-room music, Tchaikovsky, music-hall, the syncopations and rhythmic somersaults of jazz - like a tilting-ring it goes

round and round, gaily glittering, above the fundamental utterance of the main orchestra, which, grave, sombre, and complex, asserts with radical severity the intellectual level of the work as a whole' (Pages 375/376).

The characterization of Resurrection does not conform to that of Apocalipsis Cum Figuris, so that the figures of the Book of Revelations are not represented directly, but by allusion. Nevertheless, a surprising amount of the detail of Leverkuhn's projected score appears in Maxwell Davies's opera. For instance, the 'commercials', sung by the vocal quartet, are seductive transformations of the diabolical aspects of the Book of Revelations, and the 'jingles' are appropriately tonal and banal. Much of the music associated with Antichrist also belongs to this category, as does that associated with the hot gospeller and his 'crusaders' who mistake Antichrist for the real Christ. Other figures of authority are accompanied by music which is either religious, patriotic, or militaristic in character, and various kinds of popular music are employed, ranging from the 1920s to the present-day. Nevertheless, the music which forms the basis of the opera has been described as acerbic, and Maxwell Davies has stated that 'it is some of the nastiest music I know'. Additionally, the music includes a number of incidental features drawn from the composer's earlier works, such as the imitation of a wind-up gramophone running down, so it would be

difficult to over-stress the variety of styles and the significance of parody in the work. The basic chamber orchestra alternates with what has been described as a full electric and often heavily pulsating 'pop' group. All this indicates that Maxwell Davies's response to the issues raised by Thomas Mann has been very different from the composers championed by Adorno and their successors who became established as the post-war avant-garde.

Nevertheless, the links Adorno established between music and other disciplines within the humanities would undoubtedly gain Maxwell Davies's approval, as would his assault on bureaucratic Marxism. However, his conviction that music should function as a catalyst for changing society would not be fully endorsed by Maxwell Davies, nor would his dogmatic pronouncements on the merits of serial music, based on the fact that it had not been assimilated by the 'culture industry'. Thus, while Maxwell Davies accepts that the crisis in 'modern' music ('the search for authenticity')<sup>17</sup> is symptomatic of the crisis of contemporary society, in which the composer is 'forced into isolation by the repressive and total social determination characteristic of the late industrial system',<sup>18</sup> he does not believe that music should react against its 'appropriation by consumer capitalism of its traditional materials with a defiant

subjectivism and meaninglessness'. By appropriating 'popular' elements into his compositional style, he has been able to turn one of the principal 'weapons' of bourgeois culture against itself. The application of parody to this material has enabled him to demonstrate not only the utter banality of this music, irrespective of whether it is associated with advertising, or the pronouncements of political and religious authorities, but also the fact that such 'popular' forms no longer have any connection with the people, having been usurped by the various authoritarian organizations, who wish to impose their interpretation of bourgeois ideology on the mass of society as a means of gaining or increasing power.

### Section 3 - The Legacy of Mackay Brown.

All this would not have been possible without the influence of George Mackay Brown, as can be seen by comparing the function of parody in Resurrection with its use in Taverner. In the earlier opera, it was associated with the music and theology (including its symbolism) of the Reformation era, or with the musical avant-garde of the 1960s, which was seen as attempting to impose the new 'orthodoxy' of total serialism as the prevailing compositional ideology. As such, although the opera was concerned with the role of the composer in society, it concentrated on the 16th century, when the creative

musician was more directly involved with events at Court, or within the Church, so that his work could have considerable impact on the ruling authorities. By contrast, the avant-garde composer of the 1960s functioned in increasing isolation, with the result that his output had little or no bearing on wider issues. Resurrection, can be regarded as the culmination of an extended phase in which Maxwell Davies has attempted to address contemporary problems largely through Mackay Brown's writings. The close links Mackay Brown has forged with the Orkney community have been an obvious example, but equally important has been the nature of Mackay Brown's writings, which embrace all the available genres, including essays and journalism, and in which the realistic detail is invested with symbolic significance. This latter aspect is unusually pertinent to Doktor Faustus, where all the characters, together with the events of the narrative, have an additional symbolic value, and it is an equally significant facet of Resurrection, in which the element of parody is directed against the tendency of bourgeois culture to obscure the distinction between 'appearance' and 'reality'. In trying to establish an ideology which suppresses the notion of evil, bourgeois society has threatened to deprive the imagination of its symbolic dimension. By reflecting the extent to which the main developments in 20th-century culture have contributed to the distortion of 'reality', the use of parody helps to

restore the symbolic to its former status as a means of expressing fundamental 'truths'.

Another feature of Mackay Brown's writing which assumes considerable significance in Resurrection, especially as regards the characterization of the 'family' in the Prologue, is the emphasis on colloquial speech. Quite apart from the fact that colloquial speech is invariably imbued with symbolic value, it is an example of the need to emancipate the text from the constraints of 'modernist' literature, comparable with what Adorno saw as the necessity to emancipate music from 12-tone technique. As with the incorporation of 'popular' styles into the music, the use of parody is designed to show that bourgeois culture has reduced everyday speech to meaningless clichés. Accordingly, the opera develops the idea of a precise correspondence between music and text that became the hallmark of Maxwell Davies's Mackay Brown settings.

Concerning the elements of ritual, as well as the diversity of styles in Resurrection, which, in his essay on Stravinsky, Adorno described as 'the uncovering of pre-civilized layers of the psyche' leading ' . . . to dissolution of the psyche',<sup>20</sup> it can be claimed that the opera avoids the charge of a 'regressive sacrifice of the individual to the collectivizing tendencies of



society', in that it outlines the ideological interpretation of the chief protagonist's failure to conform to the conventions of society in terms of 'medical' and 'psychological' problems. As with the appropriation of elements of 'popular' culture which are used to reinforce authority, this involves a further attempt to 'turn the tables' on bourgeois society by exposing its inclination to regard any kind of non-conformity as a species of 'illness', using pseudo-scientific jargon to describe its 'symptoms'. In short, one of the opera's main themes extends both Maxwell Davies's and Mackay Brown's preoccupation with preserving identity, whether of an individual or a small community, in an increasingly hostile world. Although Maxwell Davies has cultivated a detached style in his Mackay Brown-inspired compositions, and the predominance of parody in Resurrection encourages a similar 'objectivity', the intensity of the climaxes at the end of both the Prologue and Main Act of the opera, together with much of the theatrical symbolism and the projections on screen, indicate the strength of the work's 'subjective' aspects - this refers back to Josipovici's point about the dramatization of the triumph of Death the Jester becoming the triumph of life and art, mentioned earlier.

Resurrection also addresses the other problem raised by Josipovici in his discussion of Taverner: 'Why should

anyone sing what can perfectly well be spoken'.

Again, the influence of Mackay Brown can be discerned in the way that the urgency of this question has been reduced through the composer's handling of the text and its relationship to the music. In contrast to Taverner, where part of the libretto is preoccupied with the dramatization of events from English Tudor history and conflicts with the presentation of the internal crisis unfolding inside Taverner's head, the 'action' of Resurrection is much more clearly centred in the chief protagonist's mind. In the later opera, suggestions of a linear 'plot' are greatly diminished, the 'narrative' being restricted to the transformation of the cat into a dragon and the gradual 'restructuring' of the patient, culminating in his resurrection. Both are symbolic, rather than realistic, and the stylized character of the musical transformations enhances this aspect. Consequently, in comparison with Taverner, there is little sense of continuity as the various brief scenes alternate with the twenty-four 'commercials' which constitute the main feature of the opera. They are invariably associated with jingles which are obviously sung and the political or religious slogans which frequently occur in the surrounding scenes exhibit the same characteristic. In both instances, the composer parodies the assumption, developed by bourgeois culture in conjunction with the mass media, that people will accept more readily the veracity of what

they are told about a product or concept of it is presented in an unreal, 'fantasy' form. It involves a similar suspension of disbelief as when being told a folk tale or a ghost story, and since Mackay Brown often has recourse to the techniques of such tales, it is hardly surprising Maxwell Davies has constructed his libretto on similar lines. The impression of timelessness tentatively achieved in Taverner, is fully developed in Resurrection through the use of 'flashbacks', recurring, or closely related patterns of symbolism, and the replacement of a through-composed drama with a stylized 'number' opera. As such, its structure bears comparison with Mackay Brown's poetic sequence, Fishermen with Ploughs, where the self-contained individual items are linked by theme - the history of Rackwick. In Resurrection, the theme is concerned with selected incidents from the life of the patient, but these are chosen to illustrate the more controversial aspects of contemporary society in much the same way as the poems about Rackwick were intended to highlight different facets of the Orkney community, past and present.

Indeed, most of the important Mackay Brown settings, together with The Lighthouse, to a text written in a Mackay Brown manner, have contributed to the character of Resurrection. The multiple viewpoint of Dark Angels is expanded into the functions allotted to the 'commercials', the 'Pop' group and the main soloists, plus the chamber orchestra. Magnus's

inexorable progress towards martyrdom and the restoration of 'Blind Mary's' sight are earlier examples of 'transformations' having a symbolic value. The various manifestations of Storm Kolson in The Blind Fiddler are matched by those of the cat, and later Antichrist, as they manipulate the remaining characters, especially the patient. The incidents drawn from different phases of the patient's life are an extension of the 'flashbacks' involving the three lighthouse keepers in the composer's previous opera, and the overall structure of the two works is remarkably similar. Finally, the advertising captions correspond to the television sequence in The Two Fiddlers, where the trolls assume complete control over the islanders by reducing them to total indolence. They illustrate the extent to which bourgeois culture is sustained by mindless consumption.

In short, Resurrection is conceived as a 'morality' for the late 20th-century, and besides the symbolism, the different types of theatrical presentation, together with the more outrageous gestures designed to shock the audience out of its complacency, can be seen as stemming from the Medieval tradition. Coincidentally, Mackay Brown has also embarked on a 'morality', and it may be claimed that one of the strongest recommendations of his work for Maxwell Davies is that it embodies what Leverkühn envisaged as 'an art without anguish, psychologically

healthy, not solemn, unsadly confiding, an art perdu with humanity' (Page 322). Leverkuhn's version: an art which would serve 'a community which would comprise far more than 'education' and will not have culture, but will, perhaps, be a culture' (Page 322), is reminiscent of what Mackay Brown has been striving to preserve, and this has become increasingly important to Maxwell Davies. The vehemence of 'Resurrection' stems from his conviction that bourgeois culture is fundamentally opposed to such an objective, generally preferring to condemn creative artists to a marginal role within society.

The progress from Taverner to Resurrection, substantially determined by the influence of Mackay Brown, has thus involved a fundamental change in the way that Maxwell Davies has responded to the issues confronting the contemporary composer in society. In Taverner these problems were explored through a composer of the past; in the Mackay Brown settings, they have been considered in relation to the standpoint of a contemporary writer; in Resurrection, the composer has devised his own text in such a way as to view these questions directly from his own perspective. This has involved distancing the work as far as possible from the main operatic tradition. This is partly the result of Maxwell Davies's essentially practical approach to the creation of comparatively small-scale music-theatre, but it also reflects the fact that the composer has consistently incorporated

'popular' elements into his style, beginning with 'dead' dance forms, followed by mime, music-hall gestures, puppetry, etc. By concentrating on these elements, Maxwell Davies has attempted to discard all those influences which have contributed to the development of bourgeois society in order that he can trace the crisis in contemporary culture back to what he and Mackay Brown regard as the root cause: the Reformation.

### Conclusion.

Reactions to the first production of Resurrection were generally unfavourable. They indicated that the potential vehemence of the work had not been fully realized, partly because the composer's original conception had been considerably modified in the staging - particularly as regards the more sensational aspects - but also because the elements of parody and pastiche lacked the ferocity that was the hallmark of Maxwell Davies's style in the later 1960s. Among other reasons cited for the opera's apparently muted impact were its protracted gestation, probably involving several stages, so that the composer had outgrown the style in which it was conceived. It was also suggested that Maxwell Davies had lost touch with recent theatrical developments, especially some of the more 'radical' trends, and that many of the targets of his satire were predictable.

These criticisms may be symptomatic of the fundamental changes which the composer's music has evinced during his sojourn in the Orkneys, allied to the role he has developed in relation to the local community. Having identified in Chapter 3, the differences between musical and literary 'modernism' which led to the discrepancies in Revelation and Fall, it appears that in Resurrection, another discrepancy has arisen between the technique governing the opera's structure, adapted from Mackay Brown's use of the multiple viewpoint, including 'flashback' sequences, and the need to express the subject-matter in terms of 'extreme' music. Mackay Brown's influence has invariably encouraged stylistic integration, irrespective of whether or not a text is involved, whereas Resurrection attempts to evoke the various kinds of fragmentation that are a feature of contemporary society. Accordingly, the work suffers from a paradox insofar as the technique which made possible the construction of such a complex and allusive libretto has militated against the creation of a musical 'language' which would adequately reflect the violence of the text and associated stage action.

A further aspect of this paradox is that Maxwell Davies's identification with the Orkney community has meant that he has lost emotional, if not intellectual contact with the problems confronting urban society. The element of

detachment which has infused the style of his Mackay Brown settings, and the overwhelming majority of his other Orkney works has meant that his use of parody no longer has the 'subjective' dimension that gave the works of the later 1960s their expressive intensity. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that the characterization of Resurrection is entirely symbolic, being concerned with archetypal images of destruction, rather than identifiable individuals.

Finally, Maxwell Davies has encountered the same problem as Thomas Mann: of castigating the culture that has made his work, not least his innovations in the realm of music-theatre, possible. The composer's awareness of this issue has meant dispensing with all the well-established principles associated with opera. By concentrating on 'popular' styles, he has neither realized the work's subversive intentions, nor achieved the art which would serve 'a community', envisaged by both Thomas Mann and Mackay Brown. The latter ambition has been more convincingly realized in the works which are not explicitly concerned with social criticism, and from this it is clear that while Mackay Brown has presented Maxwell Davies with the opportunity to write music which would correspond closely to the text, his influence has distanced the composer from the extreme manifestations of 'modernism', as well as the problems associated with post-industrial urban culture.



Mackay Brown has also enabled Maxwell Davies to apply the religious dimension in his music to contemporary experience, yet this experience has been limited to a specific environment, mediated through the work of a particular chronicler of Orcadian history, mythology and folklore.

All this might suggest that Douglas Dunn's judgement on Mackay Brown might equally be applied to the music Maxwell Davies has composed during the last two decades: Maxwell Davies's music needs 'a harshness, an indignation that' he ma<sup>24</sup> no longer 'be suited . . . to provide'. Nevertheless, he is involved in two major projects which will ensure that he will provide music for the wider community in addition to<sup>25</sup> the Orkney islands. He is also in the process of achieving a more balanced style than hitherto, based on 'classical' models.

However, attempts to define the precise nature of Mackay Brown's influence on Maxwell Davies's music are complicated by the fact that when subjected to methods of analysis underpinned by 'modernist' aesthetics, the relative simplicity of the composer's Mackay Brown settings tends to be regarded unfavourably in comparison with his earlier works. Nevertheless, two apparently unrelated articles may help to clarify Mackay Brown's contribution, partly by considering different aspects of the cultural changes of the 1960s and, in the case of Mikhail Bakhtin's account of

earlier manifestations of cultural turbulence, by providing an alternative perspective from which to view Maxwell Davies's recent stylistic development. In From the Pre-  
History of Novelistic Discourse,<sup>26</sup> Bakhtin cited the use of parody as a crucial factor in the early development of the novel. His description of parody as 'a critique on the one-sided seriousness of the lofty, direct word, a corrective of reality that was always richer, more fundamental, and, most importantly, too contradictory and heteroglot to be fitted  
<sup>27</sup> into a high and straightforward genre', corresponds closely to both the intention and substance of Maxwell Davies's principal works of the later 1960s, as well as to many of the literary sources from which he derived inspiration. The parodic elements in Ulysses, the compositions envisaged by Thomas Mann as representing the culmination of Leverkühn's career, or Maxwell Davies's output can be interpreted as an extension of, as well as a reaction against, 'modernism'. In all three cases, the element of reaction is expressed in terms of the Medieval tradition of parody, and this applies equally to Mackay Brown's A Spell for Greencorn. In the works discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, Maxwell Davies concentrated on re-vitalizing the nihilistic and subversive aspect of this tradition as a means of responding to all forms of ideology, and it is worth reflecting that the composer's preoccupation with the Reformation in Taverner involved focusing on a particular period of linguistic disturbance regarded by Bakhtin as the direct precursor of

the modern European novel. Bakhtin observed that the novel reflected 'in its stylistic structure the struggle between two tendencies in the languages of European peoples . . . a centralizing, unifying tendency' and 'a decentralizing tendency that . . . stratifies languages'.<sup>28</sup> An analogous upheaval can be discerned in the music of the 1960s, when the tendency towards total serialism was opposed by the trend towards stylistic pluralism, and this was associated with the general cultural turmoil of the period. The concept of deconstruction was another product of this upheaval, casting doubt on the value of structuralism as an aspect of the humanist attempt to establish 'a scientific account of culture'.<sup>29</sup> The problem, according to Jacques Derrida, which is equally pertinent to the analytical techniques associated with music, is that 'all such analyses imply that they are based on some secure ground, a centre, or transcendental signified that is outside the system under investigation and guarantees its intelligibility', whereas 'no such secure ground' exists;<sup>30</sup> 'it is a philosophical fiction'.

Derrida's Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences reflected a general distrust of systems, and Maxwell Davies's use of parody and 'defamiliarization' expressed a similar outlook in musical terms. Yet as Chapters 2 and 3 make clear, there were also profound contradictions between Maxwell Davies's music and the texts he was attempting to set. Besides the discrepancies between musical and literary 'modernism' considered in Chapter 3, it

is evident that he was unwilling to abandon all aspects of the Austro-German tradition in order to realize the full implications of setting non-narrative texts. David Osmond-Smith has observed that for those composers 'who went intensively through the Darmstadt experience', Joyce symbolized not only 'a new relationship to musical time', but also 'a way of relating to . . . material which looked back to the practice of 17th- and 18th-century composers who constantly re-worked their music in different forms' 31. Maxwell Davies was anxious to realize both these objectives, but it was through his encounter with George Mackay Brown's writings that he found a way of fulfilling his ambition without accepting the tenets of 'modernism'.

If the symphony is regarded as the musical counterpart of the novel, it will be appreciated that Maxwell Davies's quest to forge an integrated style out of the fragmentation of the later 1960s was considerably influenced by his success in distinguishing the diverse elements of the multiple viewpoint in many of his Mackay Brown settings. As Chapters 4 and 5 show, Mackay Brown's ability to re-work a few basic themes as Fables, often drawing on Orcadian folklore and legend, made a deep impression, not least because it conformed with the composer's long-standing practice of generating more than one work from the same pre-existing material. Mackay Brown also demonstrated that the narrative element could be used in conjunction with cyclic form, and because his view of history

involves recurring patterns, this is essentially an open-ended process. The writing of symphonies could proceed along similar lines, and in Chapter 6, the composer's principal structural schemes discussed in conjunction with his pre-compositional sketches. Some of the Mackay Brown settings can be interpreted as implying both a cyclic and a symphonic scheme, for example Westerlings (Chapter 5), or Black Pentecost (Chapter 6), while others do not conform to any overall design. Yet the sketches show that the composer's response to the poetry is only partly determined by the need to illustrate the text. At the same time, they also indicate that where a text is involved, the composer tends to place less reliance on pre-compositional material. Thus the sketches for Black Pentecost refer almost exclusively to the purely orchestral first movement, while those for the Second Symphony suggest that Maxwell Davies's identification with the Orkney environment has influenced even his abstract works, with the 'wave' metaphor providing the basis for the inter-related 'magic square' patterns. In short, Mackay Brown's influence has encouraged Maxwell Davies to stress the element of concrete experience in his music, irrespective of the latest theoretical or aesthetic trends.

There is a danger that this will be interpreted as an example of the anti-intellectualism some commentators believe is  
32  
active within contemporary British music, but the concluding chapters try to show that it is also a

manifestation of the growing conviction that 'high culture', and its associated theoretical apparatus, are no longer capable of responding adequately to the events of the twentieth century and the issues that confront contemporary society. Ultimately, as Arnold Whittall has pointed out in respect of other composers, Maxwell Davies is 'inescapably engaged with the most fundamental of all artistic issues of our time: whether to aim for post-'modernist' coherence that results from the balancing out of distinct contrasts or confrontations, or whether to continue to develop the 'old' 'modernism' in which a non-hierarchic organic continuity may be sustained, and contrast and conflict are kept classically subordinate'.<sup>33</sup>

However, as a result of Mackay Brown, the approach Maxwell Davies has adopted is neither that of the so-called 'complex' composers, nor of the new 'romantics'. Although his music may stem from 'this kind of moment where things are between order and disorder',<sup>34</sup> Mackay Brown's influence has led Maxwell Davies increasingly to reject the 'romantic' aspect of his creative personality in favour of 'classicism'. The objective detachment of the texts with which his music has been associated during the 'Orkney' period has encouraged him to divert his energies from the creation of music-theatre, with its emphasis on intensity of expression, in favour of 'absolute' music in which the element of craftsmanship is paramount. In the final Chapter, reference was made to the

fact that in Doktor Faustus, the main protagonists, Zeitblom and Leverkuhn, epitomize the 'classical' and 'romantic' traditions. Both stem from the same source, but insofar as it is the less extreme manifestation of post-Reformation humanist culture, 'classicism' offers not only the possibility of establishing a more satisfactory balance between form and content, but also of avoiding the isolation experienced by creative artists who attempt to forge an individual path, or adopt a subversive role within their society. The close bond which Mackay Brown has always maintained with his community has clearly served as an example which Maxwell Davies has emulated with increasing success during the 1970s and 1980s.

Accordingly, it seems safe to predict that as long as Maxwell Davies remains in Orkney, the influence of Mackay Brown's will continue to pervade his music, whether or not there are any further settings of his texts. Ultimately, the author has encouraged the composer to explore new possibilities by developing a fuller appreciation of tradition. An important facet of Mackay Brown's legacy has been his conviction that renewal and regeneration are an essential component of the historical process, and in view of the role he has played in re-forming Maxwell Davies's style following the 'expressionist' works of the later 1960s, it seems appropriate to conclude this thesis with the words the composer selected for the closing pages of Into the

### Labyrinth:

'No longer is Time a single day, rising and falling.  
Fractured now, Time reached deep into the past, runs away far  
into the future: the past all ignorance and savagery; that  
future, they say, a golden road.

'Perhaps in another age, from the secret sources, from the  
dark, crystal pulse at the heart of the island, that healing  
current may rise, circle on lucent circle - but now, the  
source is choked.

'If you listen, listen, perhaps the song of Water is still  
there, hidden, moving, deep under the stones.' (The Well).

### Notes.

1

'Music Now', BBC World Service, dated 16th January  
1987.

2

Programme Book for the 1984 St Magnus Festival, Page 39.

3

'Music Now', BBC Radio 3, 9th March 1979.

4

Ibid.

5

S. Pruslin (Editor), 1979, Page 46.

6

Op. Cit., Page 45.

7

There is no indication that the composer was influenced  
by The Master and Margarita, but the cat, Behemoth,  
constitutes one of the Devil's principal incarnations in



Bulgakov's novel. Moreover, a link can be established between Satan's four-fold appearances and the Axiom of Maria referred to in Appendix 3 (see also Alchemical Studies, Page 151).

- 8 Roland Barthes, 1972, Page
- 9 R. Barthes, Op. Cit., Page 67.
- 10 S. Sadie (Editor), 1980, Volume 1, Page 112.
- 11 The Open University, A308: 'The Rise of 'Modernism' in Music', Unit 30, Page 51.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 S. Pruslin (Editor), 1979, Page 44.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 The Open University, A308: Op. Cit., Page 55.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Op. Cit.,
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Op. Cit., Page 59.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 S. Pruslin (Editor), 1979, Page 46.
- 23 The same may also apply to the composer's acquaintance with recent developments in 'rock' music, and their influence on 'popular' styles. An example might be the New York musician, John Zorn, who operates across many musical 'boundaries's, establishing links between 'rock' music, jazz, free improvisation and avant-garde 'art' music. He has also made recordings exploiting the

principle of 'deconstruction' in music (South Bank Show,  
24 Douglas Dunn, 1974.

25 The Strathclyde Concerti, commissioned by the Scottish  
Chamber Orchestra in conjunction with an education  
programme being organized by the Strathclyde Education  
Authority. Maxwell Davies has also embarked on a series  
of music-theatre pieces for schools, to be presented at  
St Magnus Festivals, beginning in 1989. Another feature  
which has been derived from the Strathclyde project is a  
residency involving a young composer who will work in  
various schools in Orkney, creating a number of  
collective compositions with children of various ages to  
be presented during the festival in conjunction with the  
usual schools concert. Finally, Maxwell Davies has  
initiated a summer school on Hoy for post-graduate  
composers, beginning in 1989, in which the participants  
will be encouraged to create pieces inspired by the sonic  
and other environmental characteristics of the island.

26 D. Lodge (Editor), 1989, Pages 124/156.

27 Op. Cit., Page 136.

28 Op. Cit., Page 144.

29 D. Lodge (Editor), 1988, Page 107.

30 Ibid.

31 'Music Weekly', BBC Radio 3, 30th April 1989.

32 A. Whittall, in Contact No. 33, 1989, Pages 20/23.

33 Op. Cit., Pages 21/22.

34 Contact No. 32, 1988, Page 41.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 - A Note on 'Transformations'.

The notion of transforming material has become central to the creative process. In view of the significance that has been attached to Maxwell Davies's use of 'transformation processes', especially their metaphorical or symbolic associations, a comparison with Mackay Brown's less strictly defined concept of 'transformation' may prove useful.

On one level, Maxwell Davies's application of the principle of 'transformations' is specific to his compositional technique. It involves the generation of pitch material, together with related durational values, by the systematic manipulation of 'sets', or 'series's, frequently drawn from pre-existing music such as plainsong fragments. By the late 1960s, the composer had amassed a vast repertoire of transformational procedures, which he has subsequently simplified by concentrating on numerical sequences derived from 'Magic Squares' or the Tarot pack. These sequences determine the original disposition of the pitches and their associated durations, and are then used to transform a theme into its inversion, or into an entirely different theme by altering its intervallic and rhythmic contours. The significance of 'Magic Squares' and the Tarot pack is that their symbolic connotations have encouraged the composer to

develop the metaphorical aspect of his transformational schemes, already evident in Act I Scene 4 of Taverner. It is on the level of meaning, rather than technique, that Maxwell Davies establishes common ground with Mackay Brown's notion of 'transformation'.

Transformations occur in Mackay Brown's re-working of many of the Orcadian legends and folk tales associated with the prehistoric monuments whose construction was based on the use of 'Magic Squares'. In these fables, such natural phenomena as the transformation of seed into corn, or the regular pattern of seasonal changes, are attributed to supernatural powers, and Mackay Brown has invested these events with Christian symbolism. Thus, even in works where Mackay Brown texts are not directly involved, Maxwell Davies has followed the poet's example by relating his 'transformation processes' to the astrological and Christian traditions, creating a symbolic link between the material to be transformed and the agent of its transformation. Examples include Ave Maris Stella, where the 'Magic Square of the Moon' is associated with 'Our Lady of the Sea, or A Mirror of Whitening Light, in which one of the central tenets of alchemy - the transformation of mercury into gold - is linked to the Christian notion of Pentecost.

Another respect in which the composer's and writer's concepts of 'transformation' are largely in agreement is the extent to



which they are 'goal-orientated'. This has influenced Maxwell Davies's attempt to reconcile the principles of the Austro-German 'symphonic' tradition with the advent of post-'tonal' music, and the feeling of a strong inclination towards linear development is also evident in Mackay Brown's earliest poetry. The Storm illustrates the author's handling of this aspect of 'transformation'. The imagery and symbolism, allied to the 'voyage' motif in the turbulent central section, with its purgatorial implications, are all directed towards a spiritual 'transformation', which achieves its fulfilment in the narrator's acceptance of monasticism.

Allied to the idea of 'goal-orientation' is the idea of contrast, which accounts for the drama that is inevitably implicit in both Mackay Brown's writing and Maxwell Davies's music. At the metaphorical and symbolic level, transformations are a constant feature of Mackay Brown's output, irrespective of genre. Insofar as they are the result of the writer's concentration on a personal vocabulary of imagery, they are integral to the basis of his creative personality. The manner in which key images are 'developed' in both short passages and more extended sequences (whether poetry or prose), indicates Mackay Brown's preoccupation with the notion of 'transformation' as a means of achieving overall unity. It also shows him establishing a relationship with the various cyclic patterns (natural and historical) unfolding at different speeds. An analogy can be drawn with

the function of Maxwell Davies's 'transformation processes'  
in determining the course of individual movements within the  
context of a complete work.

Appendix 2 - The Achievements of Mackay Brown and Maxwell Davies in the Light of Recent Trends in Literary Theory and Music Analysis.

Terry Eagleton's Literary Theory: an Introduction has been used as the basis of this discussion because its anti-authoritarian approach corresponds closely with Maxwell Davies's outlook. (Maxwell Davies's decision to make many of his sketches available represents a further reaction against 'modernism', and its precursor 'romanticism', for it constitutes a significant step towards 'demystifying' the creative process while, at the same time, undermining some widely-held assumptions in academic circles.)

The creative artist's attitude to the social function of imaginative texts - their production and reception - has a direct bearing on the kind of relationship he establishes with his community. George Mackay Brown has ignored the tenets of 'modernism' not only by paying scant attention to the literary techniques they have engendered, but also by disregarding current definitions of the role of the artist within society. On the basis of recollections of his boyhood in Stromness, he has created an idealized version of the distant past dominated by an oral tradition in which literature had not been sub-divided into different categories and where, as in the Icelandic Sagas, the distinction between

fact and fiction, historical, or artistic 'truth', counted for little.

Until he settled in the Orkneys, Maxwell Davies's career had conformed more closely to the 'romantic' or 'modernist' notion of the creative artist as an 'outsider', forced into isolation by the need to intensify his compositional language through the use of esoteric techniques or other devices, in an attempt to re-invigorate our perceptions of everyday 'reality'. This aspect of 'modernism' has been accompanied by a preoccupation with aesthetics which, as Terry Eagleton has observed, was a consequence of the rise of utilitarianism as 'the dominant ideology of the industrial middle-class: fetishizing fact, reducing human relations to market exchanges, and dismissing art as an unprofitable ornamentation'<sup>1</sup>. It was the product of an increasing emphasis on 'the sovereignty and autonomy of the imagination', in which the 'romantic' writer became detached from actual history.<sup>2</sup> Works in the philosophy of art gave rise to 'our contemporary ideas of the symbol, an aesthetic experience, of aesthetic harmony'<sup>3</sup>, and although the notion of 'modernism' has been subjected to increasingly critical scrutiny, it is on the basis of such ideas that attempts to define the precise relationship between words and music have been developed.

One of the most interesting parallels, which is hardly

coincidental, since it relates to a cultural phenomenon embracing both music and literature, is that between the dissemination of literary theory, the growth of music analysis as an academic discipline, and the gradual infusion into British music of influences from the post-war European avant-garde. Besides their impact on his own music, Maxwell Davies was actively involved in bringing the achievements of the pioneers of 'modernism' and his Continental contemporaries before the public, and allowing for the customary time-lag between the literary and musical expression of new ideas or concepts, the zeal with which he attempted to change the critical climate in the latter sphere during the later 1950s has many striking similarities with F. R. Leavis's literary 'campaign' of the 1930s.

As members of the lower middle-class with a provincial background, each fitted uneasily into their respective 'establishments'. Maxwell Davies's ideas on music education have been strongly affected by the lack of tuition he experienced at school, and the fact that he was dismissed from the composition class at the Royal Manchester College of Music. Both attempted to alter prevailing traditional attitudes by introducing higher standards of criticism, so that Maxwell Davies's rigorous application of 'serial' procedures in his early compositions can be regarded as the equivalent of Leavis's strict adherence to the text in his critical writings. There is even a sense in which Leavis's

distrust of 'popular' writers, notably Dickens, was shared, at least temporarily, by Maxwell Davies with regard to composers of the standard repertoire, so that his early works generally eschew the Austro-German tradition in favour of Medieval/Renaissance models. Both sought to account for the development of 'modernism' in terms of tradition, and as a result, adopted an increasingly ambivalent attitude to some of its tenets.

It should be stressed that unlike Leavis, Maxwell Davies has never believed that the greatest music can only be fully understood by a privileged minority and that attempts to encourage the widest possible appreciation would lead to a lowering of educational standards. Accordingly, he has never espoused the notion of a return to an 'organic community', as advocated by both Leavis and T. S. Eliot, but there are passages in Mackay Brown's writing which come close to expressing similar sentiments and, to a considerable extent, the small, relatively self-contained Orkney community provided a focus for the composer at a time of major stylistic change. Comparative isolation enabled him to react with a degree of detachment from the compositional and analytical trends he had helped to encourage, for he realized, by the later 1960s, that total serialism and its derivatives lacked the expressive potential of 'tonal' music. The idealism of Mackay Brown did not constitute an alternative solution, but it provided a new point of

departure based on the re-assertion of values which had been discarded in favour of the products of industrial technology and the mass media.

As Douglas Dunn has indicated, Mackay Brown's writing is fundamentally traditional, but its avoidance of esotericism in order to maintain a close link with the Orkney people proved an important stimulus for Maxwell Davies. Following T. S. Eliot, Mackay Brown attacked what Terry Eagleton has called the 'whole ideology of middle-class liberalism: the official ruling ideology of industrial capitalist society'.<sup>4</sup> Mackay Brown has not endorsed Eliot's authoritarian interpretation of literary tradition, but has identified the same targets as the principal enemies of social harmony: 'Liberation, romanticism, protestantism, economic individualism'.<sup>5</sup> Above all, he has compared contemporary society unfavourably with the Medieval Orkney community which he portrays in terms of a clear hierarchical structure, and where life was dominated by the rituals of everyday existence and the rhythm of the seasons. Such views were totally at variance with contemporary 'reality', and were not seriously envisaged as the basis of a serious social critique. Yet one reason why Mackay Brown's texts offered Maxwell Davies an example of how to stimulate the appreciation of music in the islands was that they incorporated material based on legends and myths which were familiar to many people. Accordingly, while Maxwell Davies's music was becoming the subject of

rigorous analysis, he had already embarked on a campaign to undermine the principles which had encouraged the growth of this aspect of musical theory. Since the same principles were also responsible for the rise of structuralism as an acceptable form of literary criticism, Terry Eagleton's account of this phenomenon, while evincing a definite bias against recent academic trends, serves a valuable purpose by emphasizing the extent to which cultural developments are influenced by ideological considerations.

It should be stressed that Eagleton's discussion forms part of a wider interpretation of the way literary theory has been introduced into this country, and is designed to illustrate our general reluctance to accept new intellectual ideas: 'These critics operate, one might say, rather like intellectual immigration officers. Their job is to stand at Dover as the newfangled ideas are unloaded from Paris, examine them for the bits and pieces which seem more or less reconcilable with traditional critical techniques, wave these goods genially on and keep out of the country the rather more explosive items of equipment - Marxism, Feminism, Freudianism - which have arrived with them. Anything unlikely to prove distasteful in the middle-class suburbs is supplied with a work permit. The less well-heeled ideas are packed back on the next boat'.<sup>6</sup> He suggests that the forms of literary criticism which are welcomed by our educational institutions are those which, with or without adaptation, uphold the



prevailing ideology, and the merit of structuralism, at least in some of its manifestations, and irrespective of its value as an analytical method, is that it has 'kept literary criticism in a job'.<sup>7</sup>

This attitude concerning what are regarded as 'acceptable' forms of literary criticism is substantially corroborated by Ian Bent's thoroughly unbiased survey of the history of music analysis, including a brief description of the recent methods<sup>8</sup> which have achieved widespread recognition, and it seems to have been extended to some Continental composers, knowledge of whose output is restricted to a few relatively uncontroversial scores. On the one hand, there has been a shift towards increasingly esoteric theory; on the other, as in literature, Marxism, if not Feminism and Freudianism, has been avoided, presumably because of its power to communicate ideas which would question the values governing the teaching of music in universities. Despite the differences between 'modernism' in music and literature, the phenomenon has been absorbed into both disciplines with equal facility, so the predominant ideology remained undisturbed, in much the same way as it transcended political divisions.

In short, literature and music at the highest level were expected to uphold the ideas of the capitalist establishment and would generally continue to be disseminated through the familiar arts, as well as academic institutions, thereby

keeping administrators and commercial operators, in addition to educators, in a job. A few exceptions are allowed, especially if they show signs of being commercially successful and provided they do nothing more than create an impression of radicalism by stimulating a certain amount of debate, and it is in this spirit that some of the more innovative aspects of music and literary theory have been introduced.

#### Structuralism and Music Analysis.

Consequently, besides the similarity of their academic function, correspondences between the advent of structuralism in literature and the proliferation of analytical techniques in music are not difficult to detect, and there are indications that some of the principal critical objections to these enterprises will prove equally valid in either discipline. There is certainly evidence that as early as the 1960s, Maxwell Davies was employing concepts that have subsequently become central to the vocabulary of post-structuralism, particularly the notion of 'defamiliarization', so that the significance of Eagleton's discussion of these developments is not limited to the teaching of literature or even music, but is unusually pertinent to the evolution of the composer's views on the role of music in society.

As its title indicates, one of the purposes of structuralism is to reduce the underlying forms of literary texts to a small number of basic categories which have their origins in folklore and mythology. Though it is restricted to 'art' music, and was originally conceived in terms of 'tonal' composition, Schenkerian analysis is intended to fulfil a similar function, and it is possible to establish a superficial connection between the illustration of the theoretical concept he called the 'Ursatz' (New Grove, Figure 20, Page 370) and Eagleton's structural outline of a simple story (Literary Theory, Page 95). Coincidentally, although Mackay Brown has not contributed to the development of structuralism in English-speaking literary criticism, a link can be forged between his cyclic theory of history and that professed by Northrop Frye in his The Anatomy of Criticism, the most significant precursor of structuralism in the English language. As with the majority of Mackay Brown's writings, Frye's theory is rooted in the pre-industrial past. In consequence, he regards literature as existing independently of what he considers to be the determinism of actual history and because it 'is an 'autonomous verbal structure''<sup>9</sup>, it can be viewed objectively. To a considerable extent, their view of literature as 'a kind of collective Utopian dreaming which has gone on throughout history'<sup>10</sup>, in which the notion of revolutionary change is seen as an aberration, has been influenced by their attachment to Christianity and their belief that literature

can substitute for religion. Yet whereas Frye's Christian outlook has been tempered by 'humanist' considerations, including the idea that literature can be studied scientifically - a salient feature of traditional 'liberal' education - Mackay Brown holds that literature is essentially a reflection of the rituals and ceremonies of everyday experience. As such, it is an extension of his interpretation of Medieval Catholicism as the expression of an integrated society. Neither is a source of intellectual speculation.

This idealistic standpoint has no relation to either Medieval or contemporary 'reality', but the idea that art could appeal to and unify all strata of a community, based on his imaginative re-creation of pre-Reformation Orkney society in which the emphasis on specialized forms of knowledge is much less pronounced, has clearly attracted Maxwell Davies.

The significance Mackay Brown attaches to the functional, rather than the theoretical aspects of art has been particularly important in that it has encouraged Maxwell Davies not only to write music exemplifying a similar viewpoint, but also to make his composition sketches readily accessible. This has obviously assisted students of his music, but it has also undermined the veracity of 'analyses' in which attempts of been made to outline the composer's procedures based on secondary evidence, such as programme

notes.

The main problem with structuralism as interpreted by Eagleton, or the various forms of music analysis discussed by Bent is that any insights they may offer about a particular creation are usually obtained at the cost of either obscuring or even ignoring the meaning of the literary or musical text. The blame, however, does not rest solely with the structuralists or music analysts. When Stephane realized that language does not refer outside itself, or when influenced by this insight and seduced by the development of technology recognized that sound was equally non-referential, took a decisive step in separating art from 'reality' - a process most embodied in the abolition of conventional narrative or of tonality. this, it is but a short step to 'the belief that the individual units of system have meaning only by virtue of their relations to one another'<sup>11</sup> one of the central tenets of structuralism, as well as of some recent of the Schenkerian method, notably by Alan Forte. By concentrating on the structure, the is relegated to a subsidiary status, so that besides the fact that and the corresponding techniques of music analysis could provide valuable illumination about the formal aspects of complex works, they also enabled 'modernist' texts to be absorbed into the prevailing ideology by largely avoiding their subversive or controversial features. Together, writers, composers, and their academic commentators have

developed a cycle of esotericism, so that the apparent simplicity of the original of Saussure and Schenker, or even Schoenberg's 12-tone method, be proliferated, producing a variety of complex formulations.

Saussure and Schenker were both influenced by the advent of 'modernism' to the extent that they were motivated by an apparent crisis in literature and music to clarify, respectively, the theory of language and composition in the hope of establishing a basis for some kind of renewal. The complexities associated with their achievements stem largely from the work of their successors, but Roger Sessions's observations concerning Schenker's theories, especially the way they became increasingly speculative, are equally, if not more applicable to subsequent developments in both spheres.

Sessions pointed out that Schenker's principles were governed by 'what is actually heard when listening to a piece of music'<sup>12</sup>. One of the most original extensions of his harmonic thinking was the concept of 'Auskomponierung', or 'composing out', which constituted both the strength and weakness in his work. It led to the development of the Urfinie but, quite apart from the fact that any description or analysis of a musical impression is an 'abstraction of a decidedly approximate nature', there are, according to Sessions, two fundamental objections. Firstly, 'it is far too primitive as a description of the actual events which

constitute a musical work, or the sensations and apperceptions that constitute the ultimate comprehension of that work'; Schenker 'interposes a dogmatic and ingeniously conceived scaffolding between the hearer and the new as the composer himself heard it, thus interfering with his direct response, which is the only possible basis of real comprehension'. Second, 'It is . . . when Schenker's teachings leave the domain of exact description and enter that of dogmatic and speculative analysis that they become essentially sterile'. It suggests 'a culture which no longer can grow through its own vitality . . . gnawing the bones of its past, for the past can be kept alive only through vital growth into a present in which the creative impulse is still alive and the ultimate criterion no artificially cultivated set of judgements based on analysis or research, but the living response of sensitive and exacting minds'.<sup>13</sup>

The principle of 'elaboration' and of 'composing out', or 'writing out' has also been applied to literature, using Saussure's theory of signs as a starting-point. His concept of language as a complete system of signs, which could be studied independently of its historical development, appealed, particularly, to Roman Jakobson (see Chapter 3), who believed that the 'poetic' consisted above all in language's being placed in a certain kind of self-conscious relationship to itself'.<sup>14</sup> Saussure's distinction between the 'signifier' (the word in written or spoken form, a 'sound

pattern') and 'signified' ('the concept, or meaning'), also applies to the complete sign and the object to which it refers ('the referrent'). In both instances, the relation is arbitrary, the meaning of each sign being determined purely by its difference from the remaining signs in the system. Saussure also distinguishes between 'parole' (actual speech, a 'speech act'), and 'langue' ('the objective structure of signs', a language) concentrating his attention exclusively on the latter. As with speech itself, the objects to which it refers are ignored.

### Structuralism.

The structuralist enterprise is concerned with extending Saussure's theory of language into other realms, in an attempt to discover the underlying laws governing any system of signs, enabling them to combine into meanings. Jakobson helped to formulate its basic principles by establishing the six components of communication, and by isolating the poetic function as pre-eminent 'when the communication focus on the message itself' (see Eagleton, Page 98). In such situations, the sign achieves a degree of autonomy, 'as an object of value in itself'.<sup>17</sup> Besides the distinction between metaphor and metonymy already considered in Chapter 3, he belonged to the 'Prague School of Linguistics', who introduced the concept of 'defamiliarization'. Quite apart



from its value in defining the nature of an artistic text, particularly through Yury Lotman's application of semiotics to the study of poetry (Eagleton, Pages 101/103), this idea is relevant to Maxwell Davies's juxtaposition of different styles, or even compositional techniques, in many of his works - though in a 'post-structural' context. The study of narrative ('narratology') has also been incorporated into structuralism. As with Jakobson's elements of communication, or the three basic types of sign originally associated with semiotics ('the systematic study of signs'),<sup>18</sup> narrative is categorized into 'spheres of action', or 'structural units',<sup>19</sup> which are then subjected to further classification.

Besides establishing objective criteria as the basis of literary criticism, structuralism has encouraged the study of a broad range of texts, as well as non-verbal sign systems, thereby reflecting the proliferation of literary styles. By treating the literary text in conjunction with any other form of linguistic expression as a 'construct' which could be analysed scientifically, it superseded the 'humanist' tradition of literary scholarship which emphasized the unique character of such texts and relied on subjective evaluations as the foundation of their pronouncements.

#### Music Analysis.

The transformation of musical analysis into a rigorous

discipline was less urgent because there already existed a significant body of theory. Yet as the influence of tonality waned, other analytical methods were adopted. Attempts were made to establish fundamental laws akin to those formulated by Schenker but no longer dependent on a 'tonal' framework, or to develop formal principles analogous to those of structuralism, including semiotics. 'Set' theory can be associated with either approach and has been used in connection with Maxwell Davies's music by both Silsbee (see Chapter 1) and Roberts (see, especially, Chapter 3). Indeed, if they needed to justify their approach, they could point out that Maxwell Davies would have encountered 'set' analysis during his studies at Princeton between 1962/1964. Alan Forte's analyses are based on the idea of defining a primary set (not necessarily of twelve tones) from which all the sub-sets are derived. A hierarchy of relationships is thus obtained which has an affinity with tonality, as well as the principles of structuralism. His use of a computer to compile a comprehensive list of 'sets' extends the work of Milton Babbitt and others, whose analyses of works by composers of the Second Viennese School led to the formulation of 'combinatorial sets'; with the invention of sets that have great flexibility and potential for long-range association; and with an exploration of the structure of non-pitch components 'determined by the operations of the (twelve-note) system and uniquely analogous to the specific structuring of the pitch components of the individual work, and thus,

utterly non-separable''. In a paper entitled

Contemporary Music Composition and Music Theory as

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Contemporary Intellectual History, Milton Babbitt

demonstrated that the organization of Webern's Concerto Opus 24 could be explained in terms of a simple mathematical theorem, and proceeded to castigate the inaccurate use of musical terminology by both musicians, and those alluding to music from the standpoint of other disciplines. He also deplored the fact that music occupied only a marginal position in contemporary aesthetics and intellectual life. Yet the work of Babbitt and others, by exaggerating the abstract tendencies of music in the direction of analytical esotericism, has exacerbated the problem, not least by associating their quest for objective rigour with a particularly convoluted form of sentence construction. For example: 'For what persists in the symmetry relation obtaining between any pair of sets in the collection secured by the customary interval-preserving transformation is not a mere symmetry of pitch-class quantity, such as that which holds between scale collections, but a symmetry of transformation, a symmetry which can be 'defeated' contextually by the temporal orientation of set appearances in the time of a composition, by the thereby imposed serial relation of 'earlier than' and 'later than', 'before' and 'after', 'precedence' and 'subsequence', but hardly deeply hierarchized if hierarchization is to transcend temporal

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primacy or instantial quantity'. Bearing in mind

Babbitt's reference to an 'authoritative crescendo of howlers' in the final extract quoted during his paper,<sup>23</sup> it must be said that the incomprehensibility of his own style is hardly guaranteed to promote enlightenment. Moreover, Forte's reduction of the pitch-class sets to their 'prime form . . . i.e., arranging the element of a set in ascending numerical order in such a way that they are contained within the smallest possible range' and transposing each set so that its first number is 0, while facilitating 'comparisons between sets in terms of their intervallic content' (see Silsbee, Appendix 'B'), contradicts the aural experience of the music. By contrast, attempts to apply some aspects of semiology and structuralism to music have at least not been hampered by an impenetrable prose style. Though J. J. Nattiez's use of 'tree diagrams' (see New Grove, Volume 1, Page 340/388, Figures 32/34) reduces the music to an abstract pattern of relationships, it is far more successful when accompanied by a verbal commentary, as at the Cambridge University Music Analysis Conference in 1986 - at least at an elementary level. By extending Derick Cooke's work on the motifs of The Ring through the establishment of formal relationships based on their melodic, rhythmic and intervallic properties, he was able to suggest that the results could then be applied to the semantic aspects of the work. Thus, in structural terms, a paradigmatic approach, involving 'a whole class of signs which may stand in for one another', leads to an exploration of the semantic, or syntagmatic

relationship, 'where signs are coupled together in a  
chain'.<sup>24</sup> In view of David Lodge's association of the former  
the metaphoric and the latter with the metonymic (see Chapter  
3), a further explanation seems to be available for the  
disjunction between music and text in Revelation and Fall.  
Whereas, in The Ring, the paradigmatic, or formal  
transformations of the motifs are matched by changes in their  
semantic relationships, in Revelation and Fall, the 'sets'  
are capable of generating musical transformations, but the  
extreme use of metaphor means that the semantic relationships  
of the text are not clearly defined.

Nattiez's 'tree diagrams' are the product of Noam Chomsky's  
theory of 'transformational grammar' which, though not  
mentioned by Eagleton, has close links with the concept of  
'deep structures'. Other attempts have been made to use the  
theory to establish a closer association between language and  
music, notably by Leonard Bernstein.<sup>25</sup> Bernstein chose his  
examples from the standard repertoire, but there are  
indications that Maxwell Davies's approach to composition may  
serve equally well, not least by providing a possible  
explanation for one of the more obvious disparities in the  
way that text and music are experienced.

According to Chomsky, various transformations - passive,  
negative, interrogative, etc. - are capable of generating as  
many as eight sentences from the simplest deep structure. By

applying this model to music and assuming that a basic triad functions as a deep structure, it is possible to derive a similar number of phrases through harmonic modifications to the individual pitches. Extending this analogy, such principles as deletion, permutation, embedding, etc. apply equally to verbal and musical syntax, except that the latter does not observe the distinction between prose and poetry. However, if Maxwell Davies's pre-compositional sketches are regarded as the equivalent of prose, the transformation of his 'magic squares' into music can be compared with the creation of poetry. In short, the plainsong or other fragments, though not themselves necessarily 'tonal', before they are subjected to Maxwell Davies's pre-compositional manipulations, are equivalent to the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic deep structures of 'tonal' music.

Yet while comparisons between music and language can be extended by demonstrating that they share many more rhetorical devices or 'figures of speech' which can be transformed into metaphor, thereby generating similar types of ambiguity, it becomes increasingly clear that the 'meaning' of music cannot be elucidated by any form of non-musical representation: verbal, graphic, or numerical. Moreover, although the structuralist enterprise has contributed some valuable insights into the creative process in both spheres, it is apparent that it is equally deficient with regard to literary texts. Besides John Searle's

observation that Chomsky considers the essence of language to  
be syntax rather than communication,<sup>26</sup> the objections to  
structuralism outlined by Terry Eagleton are significant in  
this respect. The fact that Eagleton makes the same point  
has already been mentioned, the objective being to arrive at  
a scientific method of studying literature which would not  
have to rely on the subjectivity of value judgements.  
However, that such a project is beyond realization is made  
clear by the following questions which Eagleton poses: 'How  
. . . do the structuralists identify the various signifying  
units of the text in the first place? How did he or she  
decide that a specific sign or set of signs constituted such  
a basic unit without recourse to frames of cultural  
assumption which structuralism, in its strictest form, wishes  
to ignore?<sup>27</sup>

As has already been seen (Chapter 1), Maxwell Davies's  
oeuvre has been no more exempt from these difficulties than  
any other music. Even the most authoritative account of his  
compositional methods cannot escape the fact that alternative  
interpretations are possible. This is undoubtedly an  
advantage as regards both the creative process and the  
resulting work of art, but not if the attempts to establish  
the pre-compositional material are little more than  
conjectural, based on Maxwell Davies's casual remarks, rather  
than the primary sources. The stylistic ambiguities of  
Maxwell Davies's music have resulted in alternative approaches

being combined to produce unsatisfactory interpretations of the works concerned, and where the styles are particularly diverse (St Thomas Wake, Missa Super 'L'Homme Armé'), only superficial analyses have been attempted. Moreover, Eagleton adds that 'scientific' interpretations of works of art merely indicated the extent to which they had become 'the dupe of an alienated theory of scientific practice: one<sup>28</sup> powerfully dominant in late capitalist society'. It is clear that a great deal of Maxwell Davies's music is concerned with the fact that theology suffered a similar fate at an earlier phase in the evolution of bourgeois society, and that the implications of this are still not fully understood. Eagleton's conclusive point, which can also apply to the study of music, is that if, as Jonathan Culler has argued, the purpose of literary studies is 'to advance one's understanding of the conventions and operations of an institution, a mode of discourse',<sup>29</sup> there is no reason why such a study should not be undertaken with a view to change, rather than merely to understand. The study of musical analysis may not be as ideologically controversial as the study of literature, but if it is the product of the same ideology, and the whole structuralist enterprise is undermined on the grounds not only that it is inadequate for dealing with the creative process - both production and reception - but also that 'there is nothing innocent about codes . . . whole social ideologies may be implicit in an<sup>30</sup> apparently neutral critical method', then such a practice



may no longer be tenable.

In both cases, the merits of analyses are defined by the extent to which they conform to particular conventions, and quite apart from the fact that these criteria are 'culturally and ideologically relative',<sup>31</sup> Maxwell Davies's unorthodox attitude to style, even in comparatively integrated works, ensures that his music eludes rigid systematization. Consequently, wider terms of reference may be needed to achieve a fuller appreciation.

The fact that 'total serialism' is as susceptible to instability as 'tonality' means that music is no more of a closed system than language, notwithstanding Saussure's assumption of a direct correspondence between 'signifier' and 'signified'. The similarity extends to the fact that a satisfactory definition of the 'meaning' of language has proved as elusive as the 'meaning' of music, so that at least some aspects of the post-structuralist enterprise of deconstructing hierarchies of significance based on 'first principles' have as much relevance to music as to literature. One of the main objectives has been to undermine the binary oppositions identified by structuralism as the foundation on which ideologies are built. They reflect a universal impulse to create systems of belief which rely on clear distinctions<sup>32</sup> 'between what is acceptable and what is not'. The uncomfortable or contradictory aspects of 'reality' are

relegated to an insignificant position, and, extending a technique developed in recent literary criticism whereby a marginal feature of the text is allowed to undermine the binary oppositions on which it is based, the process of deconstruction involves reinstating the excluded elements of a logical thought system in order to question its governing principles. The fact that the method has been applied to 'realist' texts makes it eminently suitable to question ideologies which present social 'reality' as 'innocent and unchangeable',<sup>33</sup> not least because literary 'realism' endorses the practice of presenting ordinary language as 'natural'. According to Roland Barthes, it denies the 'arbitrariness' of signs and thus conceals 'the socially relative, or constructed nature of language'.<sup>34</sup> His solution was to restore the notion of 'defamiliarization', in the form of the 'double sign . . . which gestures to its own material existence at the same time as it conveys a meaning',<sup>35</sup> and to acknowledge the significance of similar estrangement techniques in Brecht's concept of theatre. Similar effects abound in Maxwell Davies's output of the late 1960s, where they are generally interpreted as an aspect of his use of parody.

#### Notes.

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T. Eagleton, 1983, Page 19.

- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Op. Cit., Page 39.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Op. Cit., Page 123.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 S. Sadie (Editor), 1980, Volume 1, Pages 340/388. See  
also J. Dunsby and A. Whittall, 1988.
- 9 T. Eagleton, Op. Cit., Pages 92/93.
- 10 Op. Cit., Page 93.
- 11 Op. Cit., Page 94.
- 12 E. T. Cone (Editor), 1979, Page 233.
- 13 Op. Cit., Pages 237/239.
- 14 T. Eagleton, Op. Cit., Page 98.
- 15 T. Eagleton, Op. Cit., Page 96. See Also D. Lodge,  
1988, Page 1.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Ibid. For a discussion of the difficulties and merits  
associated with a semiotic approach to music analysis,  
see J. Dunsby and A. Whittall, 1988, Pages 211/231.
- 18 Op. Cit., Page 100.
- 19 Op. Cit., Page 104.
- 20 S. Sadie (Editor), 1980, Volume 1, Page 766.
- 21 B. S. Brook, E. O. D. Downes and S. Van Solkema  
(Editors), 1975, Pages 151/184.
- 22 Milton Babbitt, 1976, Pages 3/23.
- 23 B. S. Brook, et al. (Editors), Op. Cit., Page 155.

- 24 T. Eagleton, Op. Cit., Page 101.
- 25 L. Bernstein, Norton Lectures, Harvard University,  
1973. For more details on Chomsky's theory of  
'transformational grammar', see also J. P. B. Allen and  
P. Van Buren, 1971, especially Pages 55/68, and N.  
Chomsky, 1975, especially Pages 78/134.
- 26 B. Magee, 1978.
- 27 T. Eagleton, Op. Cit., Page 122.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 T. Eagleton, Op. Cit., Page 124.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Op. Cit., Page 125.
- 32 Op. Cit., Page 133.
- 33 Op. Cit., Page 135.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Op. Cit., Page 136.
- 36 Op. Cit., Page 132.

### Appendix 3 - 'Resurrection': Synopsis and Commentary.

The element of parody is immediately evident at the start of Resurrection. A contemporary 'nuclear family' is introduced, but 'Mam' is portrayed by a counter-tenor, dressed as a pantomime dame. Moreover, quite apart from the boy's disreputable appearance and the fact that 'Mam' is concerned about his sexual behaviour, it emerges that he is undisciplined, uneducated and unemployed. He does not conform to bourgeois values, yet he is a product of bourgeois society, resembling the Islanders in The Two Fiddlers, who were encouraged to adopt a life of idleness and impotence by a combination of the welfare state and unfettered commercialism, symbolized by the Trolls. In Resurrection, the Cat is the agent who exercises complete power. He epitomizes authoritarian regimes who make pronouncements about improving society while allowing advertising (or propaganda) to appeal to the baser instincts of each individual. Violence among the less privileged members of society is an inevitable consequence of their policies, but is turned to the advantage of the authorities who use it as an excuse to impose more repressive measures. The opera begins by showing that the Chief Protagonist is a 'victim' of these conflicting values. He is reprimanded by 'Mam', who then tries to persuade him to eat his favourite breakfast. The reference to 'pig's fry special' leads into the first 'commercial'. It also introduces a significant aspect of the

work's symbolism.

The first 'commercial' fulfils a function analogous to that of the title-page of Durer's Apocalypse (Plate 105). In the business world sketched throughout the advertising sequences, the ubiquitous Joe Cannon Organization assumes a god-like role, monopolizing every facet of the lives of those who are subjected to its influence. The composite word, 'metasaturehyperactivates' suggests a metaphysical dimension, but it is the final two sentences of the 'commercial' which make explicit the composer's principal source, as well as the notion of transformation as the work's underlying concept: 'Your re-constituted liver and lights will be a revelation. Use Joe Cannon's cooking oil and your life will be transformed.' Accordingly, the end of the 'commercial' signifies the end of what might be regarded as the work's 'introduction'.

The start of the main action is confirmed by the appearance of the cat to initiate the series of transformations. The cat's opening lines refer to the frontispiece of Jung's Alchemical Studies, where 'the spiritus mercurialis and his transformation is represented as a monstrous dragon' (illuminated drawing in a German alchemical M.S. of c 1600). The reference to 'transubstantiation' in this context probably relates to such people as the Gnostics, whose

interpretation of Christianity was regarded as heretical by the official Church, because their beliefs were influenced by alchemy and the occult. The Prologue then develops into a comparatively predictable pattern in which the appearance of other members of the family, plus typical authority figures (headmaster, doctor), engineered by the cat, are interspersed with the 'commercials'.

The second 'commercial' is based on Plate 107 (Bartsch 62), St John's Vision of Christ and the Seven Candlesticks (Revelations, 1, Verse 12, ff.) The double of 'dad' appears, brandishing a giant toothbrush and pantomime tube of toothpaste marked with seven stars. The imagery of the seven stars, 'which flash - as does his grey hair', and the accompanying line: 'His eyes all aflame and his periwig acrinkle' refer to Verse 14, while 'With righteousness flaming forth like a sword/To sanitize us all before the end of the world' is derived from Verse 16. Consequently, the 'religiously beneficent smile' bestowed by 'Dad''s double at the end of the 'commercial' strengthens the link with the Christ figure in Verses 16/18.

The cat's next appearance involves a more sinister feline mask. His text is based particularly on Illustration B.4 in Jung: Melusina as the Aqua Permanens: Woodcut in Reusner, Pandora, 1588, but the situation is complicated by the association of this illustration with B.2: 'the Filius or Rex

in the form of a hermaphrodite': Woodcut from Rosarium Philosophorum, the second part of De Alchemia, 1550. B.4: 'Melusina as the aqua permanens opening the side of the Filius (an allegory of Christ) with the Longinus. The figure in the middle is Eve (earth), who is re-united with Adam (Christ) in the Coniunctio. From their union is born the hermaphrodite, the incarnate Primordial Man. To the right is the athanor (furnace) with the vessel in the centre from which the lapis (Hermaphrodite) will rise. The vessels on either side contain Sol and Luna.' Cat: 'O Sun take me to be your bride/O Moon to me your charms confide./I shall corrupt whichever I take - /Make hard the way, narrow the gate/Scrambling all identity/So you can never tell what you might be.'

In relation to this 'speech', the significance of the hermaphrodite (B.2) is that while it 'unites the one with the three', referring to the 'Axiom of Maria', which is represented by 1 + 3 snakes, it lacks a conventional identity. Besides alluding to the issue of the male and female principles, the association with the 'Axiom of Maria' establishes a link between one of the central tenets of alchemy: 'One becomes two, two becomes three and out of the third comes one as the fourth' (Berthelot, see Jung, Page 151) and an important aspect of Christian speculation regarding the Trinity. Imagery drawn from both areas of controversy informs a good deal of Resurrection, not least



in the figure of the elder sister who, though she is first seen 'tarted up like a toffee shop', will later appear as both Phoebus Apollo and Antichrist. Although the 'secrets' she mentions are obviously of an adolescent character, they also allude to more esoteric forms of knowledge, associated with her later manifestations.

The third 'commercial' is based on Plate 108 (Bartsch 63), Revelations, Chapter 4, Verses 1/10. The advertisement for bathroom fittings is also an extension of B.4 in Jung's alchemical illustrations, and will be further developed in the cat's next transformation sequence. The 'two saleswomen and two salesmen' are transformations of the 'four living creatures full of eyes before and behind' (Verse 6) and the 'appropriately decorated thrones' they carry refer to the 'four and twenty thrones' of the 'elders' (Verse 4), above all, the 'throne set in heaven, and one sitting upon the throne' (Verse 2). The four designs of padding are variations of the descriptions of the four living creatures (Verse 7). The 'huge pictures of a crown and harp', which are 'dropped in on cue' are a parody of characteristic attributes of heaven, while the final lines of the 'commercial' are equally satirical: 'Their express thrones express/The Gospel truth/In their aerosoled heavenly home'.

The cat's next appearance with an increasingly threatening mask introduces an additional element of symbolism based on

Greek mythology, while the reference to bathing provides a further link with Illustration B.4. His 'speech' evokes the Christian and the Ancient Greek notions of the underworld, with its references to both: '. . . the black plughole/Slowly suck out heart and soul' and 'the Styx'. This imagery is echoed in the 'huge cuddly toy pig with tusks', which the younger brother drives onto the stage, as well as in the 'heraldic pig' which forms the basis of the fourth 'commercial'.

The source of the fourth 'commercial' is again Plate 108, but especially Revelations, Chapter 5, Verses 1/8. The seven tusks and seven eyes of the heraldic pig are self-explanatory, as are the 'commercial''s final lines: 'Insist on Joe Cannon's celebrated bacon - distinguished by seven seals and a gold label/With our guarantee of resurrection'. However, the derivation of the pig from both 'the lion that is of the tribe of Judah' (Verse 5) and 'the lamb . . . having seven horns and seven eyes' (the banner held by the pig also relates to the flag motif associated with the lion in Plate 118) is more controversial in view of its Judaic connotations. This is equally true of the reference to 'paschal porky, your cheery host', since paschal can signify either Easter or the Passover.

Allied to the cat's next mask, the diabolical implications of 'the black plughole' are made explicit by his accompanying

speech. Its basis is again Jung's Illustration B.4, but with the lines: 'Mercurial fluid, who can know/What succubi I might conceive', the possibility that religious 'truth' can lead to evil becomes apparent. This is all the more disturbing in that the cat's earlier words had established a link with the Filius, and the ambiguity is intensified when the parents confirm that the object of his speech is the boy (dummy).

The imagery of the fifth 'commercial' is taken from 'the four horsemen of the Apocalypse', Plate 109 (Bartsch 64), Revelations, Chapter 6, Verses 2/8. The composer instructs that 'four grotesquely schoolboyish riders with hobby-horses . . . trot across the television area with a stylized impression of a racecourse crowd in the background'. Their extra-large heads not only 'establish the Durer reference', but also relate to the dummy, a factor which assumes considerable significance at the end of the Prologue. The text advertises the services of 'Joe Cannon, Turf Accountant', giving odds on the four horses associated with the opening of the first four seals. The names given to the horses reflect their characteristics and attributes, together with those of the horsemen as described in Revelations. Particularly important in this respect is 'Thanatos the demonic'. Besides the obvious link with 'the pale horse and he that sat upon him, his name was death, and Hades followed him (Verse 8), he recalls the cat's words in association with

the 'Black Plughole': 'Rank corruption, putrification!/A  
Thanatoid spiral of inaction.'

The next sequence is longer than its predecessors, involving the appearance of two authority figures whose similarity is emphasized by the fact that both are tenor roles, separated by a further transformation of the cat, in which his mask assumes a frightening aspect. In both instances, the parody is directed less at the figures themselves than at the attitudes they embody as headmaster and vicar, respectively. With regard to the former, the main target is the elitist tendency of the education system - one of the features most vigorously criticized by Eagleton in Literary Theory. Concerning the latter, the vicar symbolizes the fact that religious leaders are no longer capable of addressing the world's major problems. In addition, the vicar amplifies the cat's immediately preceding speech by alluding to three of the characters associated with Hades, thereby creating a link to the sixth 'commercial'.

By this stage, the different levels of the text are beginning to merge in the way that the composer generally unifies his alternating sequences of material by means of 'transformation processes'. The sixth 'commercial' is interpolated into the vicar's 'homily', thus functioning as a 'commentary' so that it also elaborates the cat's previous 'speech'. The cat and 'commercial' routines indicate how easily ideas and images

can be transformed into their opposite, so that where Christian symbolism is involved, diabolical influences will be equally pervasive. Their increasingly close connection also raises the question as to which aspect of the opera is predominant - a feature that resembles the relationship between the King and the Jester in Taverner, or the equivalent characters in Blind Man's Buff.

The cat's sequence is again based on Illustration B.4, but the imagery has been transformed so that it gives rise to death, rather than birth: ' . . . Their soul divided/into Earth, Air, Water, Fire' may symbolize the division of fundamental 'truths' into contending religious dogmas, so that the influence of destructive forces can no longer be countered. Advertising represents one of the most pervasive manifestations of such influences, not least because it obliterates the distinction between 'reality' and 'appearance', or, in terms of Christian symbolism, Christ and Antichrist, but also because religious organizations have increasingly resorted to its methods. Thus, by illustrating how easily the significance of the Book of Revelations, as well as Durer's woodcuts, can be reduced to banality, Maxwell Davies introduces one of his most persistent themes: the tendency of any form of propaganda to rely on material which is trite or sentimental, especially in a religious context, constitutes almost the ultimate blasphemy. Accordingly, while the cat's appearances and his associated 'speeches'

become ever more sinister, the advertising sequences degenerate towards the hackneyed and ultimately vulgar. It is in this respect that the 'commercials' have a particular bearing on the rest of the opera.

The sixth 'commercial' continues this trend, based on Plate 110 (Bartsch 65), especially 'the distribution of white garments among the martyrs', Revelations, Chapter 6, Verses 9/16. The 'white robes' (Verse 11), are each transformed, becoming 'A Joe Cannon white plastic mack/The best protection for your back', while the three figures of the underworld mentioned by the vicar function as models, each having attributes of an appropriately satanic character. The reference to 'worthy maters' ('pronounced as in Latin, like English 'martyrs'') establishes a connection with 'the souls of them that hath been slain for the word of God' (Verse 9), and there is an allusion to the fifth and sixth seals in terms of a raffle: 'Four tries at the seal - but the fifth doesn't baffle'.

After the continuation of the vicar's homily, the cat reappears, his metamorphosis having reached the stage where he can be recognized as a dragon. His words indicate that the source is still Jung's Illustration B.4, and this is, in fact, an extension of his previous 'speech'. The four elements are again prominent, and in this connection, the lines '... rebirth/Of Sun and Moon fast unified/

Androgynously, side by side' are clearly related to the earlier 'Sun and Moon, by death united/In the tomb, their soul divided/Into Earth, Air, Water, Fire,/Is called away, that it inspire,/A parthenogenetic urge/To interpolate death's final dirge'. All this portends the kind of 'rebirth' that can be anticipated, which is confirmed by the lines: 'Tartarus has been foresaken/The gate of Hades flung wide open/Pity that the swarms of hell/Have been let loose on earth as well.'

The cat's diabolical transformation is reflected in the authority figures he conjours up, culminating in the doctor. He appears in response to the question: '. . . What apparition/Will blunder forth in resurrection?' While, on the one hand, he is a grotesque caricature, his large pantomime syringe, which he waves about, recalling the headmaster with his cane, his words allude to some of the least acceptable features of contemporary society: 'It does not pay to medicate/Social classes four and five -/A group so superstitious/That they actively connive/In the fiction that they benefit/From all we're paid to do/While they're taken in and tranquilized/By the fool-proof status quo.' These, and other aspects of his speech, echo the headmaster's contribution, whilst he also makes it clear that all the characters grouped in the background are agents of the cat.

The seventh 'commercial' prefigures the conclusion of

the Prologue by means of a 'vivid stylized projection, or representations of the apocalyptic events mentioned in the jingle on the television screen'. It is again based on Plate 110, Revelations, Chapter 6, Verses 9/15, but especially the opening of the sixth seal (verses 12/14) on whose imagery the jingle is closely modelled. The final lines: 'With Joe Cannon's tonic/You can rise from the dead' point to the symbolic 'resurrection' which occurs at the end of the Prologue and, in more exaggerated form, at the culmination of the Main Act.

The completion of the cat's transformation is marked by the fact that it takes up station 'just behind the dummy, so that it is clear that the words are its, too'. There is an echo of the Controller's words from Black Pentecost in the line: 'Of all God's creatures I'm the boss', while the subsequent line: 'A homunclic anthropos' reinforces both the Ancient Greek and diabolical associations. As with the jingle, the final couplet is directly related to the events at the end of the Prologue and Main Act: 'The hero's universal mind/Exploding children all around.'

Thus it is made clear that although the text makes no suggestion of a 'realistic' narrative, the identification of three distinctive strands throughout the Prologue is sufficient to make the moment at which they coalesce a dramatic 'coup de theatre'. The process is most clearly seen



in the fact that the walls surrounding the characters at the back of the stage gradually move inwards, forcing them forwards towards the dummy and into closer proximity with each other. This is particularly noticeable when they form a chorus to persuade the dummy to accept the values and beliefs of 'broad humanity', rather than remaining ' . . . A stubborn, outcast clown'. The comparison with other Maxwell Davies scores concerning protagonists who do not 'conform' is self-explanatory, and at the word 'clown' . . . the cat places with a flourish the dragon face mask in front of the son's head. At that point, the dummy's head explodes, spraying the singers . . . with blood red streamers, a generous fountain of blood. The lightning emphasizes the gore of the explosion.'

The fact that the Main Act follows a roughly similar pattern is one aspect of the way in which it mirrors the structure, imagery and symbolism of the Prologue. Indeed, although the two parts of the opera are separated by an instrumental transition, a definite link is established in that, following the exploding head, the Act begins with the eighth television 'commercial' advertising a cure for 'flatulence'. Another factor which strongly indicates that the Act is a continuation of the Prologue is that the 'commercials' still adhere to the plate order of Durer's woodcuts. Accordingly, 'commercial' 8 is based on Plate 111 (Bartsch 66), 'Four Angels Staying the Winds and Signing the Chosen',

Revelations, Chapter 7, Verses 1/3. It features four nurses/doctors (dancers), whose medical attributes are complemented by those of the four angels.

The Act opens with the entry of four surgeons performing a similar 1920s 'high-kicking' routine. The dummy (boy) has been transformed into an anaesthetized patient, and the events of the Act are the result of their 'investigations' of the patient ' . . . To do what we are able/To save a life'. Thus, a multiple viewpoint is again involved, for besides the 'commercials', the narrative is concerned with the sequence of 'operations' which, in turn, give rise to various aspects of the patient's past, illustrating how he had been indoctrinated and perverted by society.

The 'first investigation' continues the theme of the Prologue by exposing 'to the world his self-induced degeneration'. As such, the chorus with which the surgeons begin the Act reflects that which the authority figures had sung at the close of the Prologue. As they ' . . . conjour up evidence of his promulgating blasphemy,/His crackpot philosophies of wild, subversive anarchy', it becomes clear that the main corrupting influences are those of the four principal ideologies, each symbolized by characteristic features displayed by the surgeons in turn: Catholicism - The white Abbot (a Dominican); Protestantism - a non-conformist minister; Capitalism - a 'flashy' businessman; Communism -

a party 'hack'. Each is heralded by a fanfare. The different ideologies are encapsulated into 'speeches' made by the disguised surgeons, from which it becomes apparent that despite doctrinal differences, all are of an authoritarian disposition. Each concludes with the 'speaker' attacking the patient violently with one of his 'attributes', respectively, crucifix, large family Bible, giant cigar, revolver, and the 'speeches' are all followed by a collective response in the form of a 'chorus', whose first line reflects the 'creed' that has just been propagated, for example: 'Intercession for the faithful', or 'Solidarity with the workers', but the rest of which is identical, underlying the repressive tendencies of the four 'regimes': 'But keep them to their station,/By threats of hell, the army,/Redundancy, inflation', etc.

The surgeons remove their disguises during the ninth 'Commercial'. This is again based on Plate 111, Revelations, Chapter 7, Verses 1/3, but an element of ambiguity is involved. The 'advertisement' is for 'Joe Cannon's tours and cruises', in accordance with the crowd scene depicted in Plate 111, yet the ' . . . Four hot springs of our newest/Most fashionable health resort' could refer to Revelations, Chapter 8, Verses 7/13, which is part of the text illustrated in Plate 112 (Bartsch 68), 'The seven trumpets are given to the angels and the results of the first four trumpet calls'. Persuading people to part with their

money for such holidays is obviously one way of keeping them 'to their station'.

The next 'operation' sequence involves a 'flashback' to a political rally in which the 'speakers' are reincarnations of characters from the Prologue, transformed into figures from Greek mythology. Many of their diabolical features are similarly derived from the Prologue, and the scene makes great play with ridiculing some of the more pompous aspects of ceremonial occasions. Phoebus Apollo (the elder sister of the Prologue) appears on a chariot with sun-wheel ('a trolley is pushed on the stage by a pole attachment'). Preceding the trolley is a 'cut-out of a weary old nag with triple heads'. Phoebus appears with his own 'crowd', comprising a series of cut-out heads strung along a lightweight pole which he manipulates as he sings, especially when he interpolates his own cheers at suitable points of his address. He also has a paper megaphone. After assassinating Phoebus Apollo, Pluto (Vicar/Pluto of the Prologue) assumes control of the rally until he is swamped by the vast bulk of Zeus/Hera ('Mam' of the Prologue), now represented by a huge dummy, possibly on stilts. It is during Zeus/Hera's 'speech', which emerges from the wind-up gramophone, that images of total destruction are projected across the stage, culminating in his own deflation to a shrivelled heap. These images also reflect the events described in 'Revelations', Chapter 8, Verses 2/13, thereby foreshadowing the tenth 'commercial'.

Yet 'commercial' ten is as ambiguous as its predecessor. Similar scenes of destruction are replayed as in Zeus/Hera 'speech', this time advertising a war game: 'The newest educational idea in Christmas gifts for imaginative youngsters'. 'Each box provided with a spectacular destruction kit . . . /Burn up the sea, burn up the earth./Darken the sun, the moon and the stars./Let it rain fire, hail and blood/And all in the comfort of your own fireside.' A good deal of the jingle is closely modelled on Revelations, Chapter 8, Verses 7/13, but the fact that this is a war game played by two 'small children' relates equally to Plate 113 (Bartsch 69), 'The Battle of the Angels', Revelations, Chapter 9, Verses 13/19. Another interesting allusion occurs at the conclusion of the 'commercial', where the address given: 'Mammoth Apocalyptic Toy Shop, 666 Fetter Lane' recalls The No 11 Bus, Scene 12: 'The Star and the Judgment'.

Henceforth, the different sequences tend towards a greater degree of integration - a feature which again mirrors the Prologue. The episode begins with a slapstick routine in which the four surgeons open the patient's cranium ('with exaggerated effort') and remove 'streamers - confetti - cog-wheels', etc., symbolizing the detritus which society has inculcated into his mind. It continues with the eleventh television 'commercial' which suggests that the food we eat

is as much inclined to rubbish as the propaganda to which we are subjected. It is based on Plate 114 (Bartsch 70), St John Devours the Book, Revelations, Chapter 10, Verses 1/5 and 8/10. A Rabbi (dancer) appears 'flapping like a vulture' with a huge stomach pump, and the words sung by the two men of the vocal quartet are drawn primarily from Revelations, Chapter 10, Verses 8/10. The 'Book' is transformed into 'scollops' which have not been treated in accordance with Jewish law, and they have to be purged before 'the last trump shall sound'.

Having sacrificed various forms of psychiatric treatment, including brain surgery, the episode continues in similar vein with the four surgeons turning 'to the motions of the heart'. Their 'operation' is linked to the notion of apostolic conversion, symbolized by the appearance of a 'hot gosseller' and 'four crusaders'. The latter are dancers, performing in music-hall style, while the 'hot gosseller' is the Vicar of the Prologue, as well as Pluto. The choruses sung by the surgeons are thus related to his evangelical 'speeches', as well as to the advertising jingles.

Accordingly, religion is increasingly portrayed as simply another 'product', capable of being given the 'hard sell'.

The twelfth 'commercial' breaks the sequence of Durer's Apocalypse and the texts to which the woodcuts are related. It presents a dancer, or dancers with aerosol cans, and the

'caption', sung by the vocal quartet, refers to a 'plague of locusts' (Revelations, Chapter 9, Verse 3. Insofar as these are the result of the angel, who had been given the key, opening 'the pit of the abyss' (Verses 1/2), there is a link with Plate 120 (Bartsch 75), 'The Angel with the Key hurls the Dragon into the Abyss', etc. (see Revelations, Chapter 20, Verses 1/3). The 'giant sealed vials', mentioned in the 'advertisement', are self-explanatory.

Another brief evangelical slogan by the hot gosseller, followed by an appropriate choral 'response' from the crusaders (sung by the surgeons, as before) leads to the next television 'commercial', though the reference to 'our Jesus bus' may also allude to The No 11 Bus.

The thirteenth 'commercial' returns to the Durer woodcuts, but the imagery is no longer drawn from a single plate. There is a display of a 'fancy dress funeral cortege', based on the text, and the reference to the 'Four Angels Funeral Home' is to either Plate 111, 'Four Angels Staying the Winds', etc., or to Plate 113, 'The Battle of the Angels', Revelations, Chapter 9, Verses 13/19. The ' . . . Lions' heads and serpents' tails', which the pall-bearers can have 'at a small extra cost' refer particularly to Verses 17/19, but they also echo the appearance of Mrs. Cerberus who 'has three dog's heads, with a scarf of twisted snakes' just before 'commercial' 6. The concluding caption of the

'advertisement': 'a Division of Joe Cannon Foods P.L.C.', besides being one of the more striking examples of the composer's preoccupation with 'bad taste', can also be regarded as an allusion to Plate 114, 'St John Devours the Book.

After another brief interlude for the hot gosseller and crusaders, television 'commercial' 14 is derived primarily from Plate 114, Revelations, Chapter 10, Verses 1/5. The 'voice over': 'My chilblains are like the fires of hell', clearly refers to Verse 1, while the old man ('Dad' of the Prologue), 'with one foot in a steaming footbath', alludes to the angel in Verse 5. The 'smiling dollybird - daughter of the prologue', may prefigure either Plate 115, 'The Woman clothed with the Sun', etc., or Plate 119, 'The Whore of Babylon'. The ''three-in-one' chilblain powders' have obvious trinitarian implications, and the fact that they contain 'an added bonus: instant salvation, ready-made' strengthens the link with Plate 114, especially 'Revelations, Chapter 10, Verses 8/10.

'Predestination' is the theme of the next hot gosseller/crusaders episode, concentrating on the Calvinist notion of the 'elect' and referring to the way that Calvin imposed his interpretation of Christianity by law: 'Jesus commanded his elect/To put his laws on earth into effect', etc. There is thus an echo of the conflict between Church



and state in Taverner, particularly as the chorus ends with a reference to 'Kings and Queens', which is 'developed' in the next 'commercial'.

'Commercial' 15 is based on Plate 115 (Bartsch 71), 'The Woman Clothed with the Sun and the Seven-Headed Dragon', Revelations, Chapter 12, Verses 1/16. The 'gooey 'cocktail' style music' establishes the sentimental character of this 'commercial' and, together with the 'ecstatic 'choir' of the vocal quartet' in the previous 'commercial', reflects the composer's encounter with religious advertising during a visit to Salt Lake City in 1977. Two fashion models appear, dressed, respectively, as a King and pregnant Queen, the latter alluding to Verses 1/2. The 'flaming robes' are clearly based on the image of 'The Woman Clothed with the Sun', and the 'outsize sickle man in the moon shoes' may be a distant echo of 'the two wings of the great eagle', 'given to the woman' (Verse 14). The 'advertisement' for 'maternity gowns', 'a guarantee against all miscarriages', is a pun on the legal system, extending the earlier Calvinist references.

The hot gospeller's final contribution initiates the climax of this section, in which the Christian and the commercial are united in the figure of Antichrist. The hot gospeller's reference to 'the saviour . . . stepping down from heaven' is ambiguous, not least because of the derivation from Revelations, Chapter 12, Verse 9, describing a dragon being

'cast down to the earth'. The crusaders' subsequent chorus recalls the concluding chorus of the Prologue.

Accordingly, the 16th television 'commercial' is based on Plate 116 (Bartsch 71), 'St Michael Fighting the Dragon', Revelations, Chapter 12, Verses 7/9. The advertisement extends the image of the 'clouds of righteousness' with which the chorus had ended. The 'flashy young man' is related to 'flashy' businessman who symbolizes capitalism. the 'dollybird' is a further manifestation of either Plate 115 or Plate 119. The revolver carried by the 'flashy young man', which, when fired, releases a bouquet of flowers, is characteristic of the militaristic jargon frequently associated with evangelical Christianity. However, as the advert is for 'Dragon/Deodorant spray', and the dragon is 'the deceiver of the whole world', the 'victory' is illusory, and hence the 'commercial' functions as a prelude to the appearance of Antichrist.

Antichrist enters 'from on high (on rainbow) . . . in pulsating psychodelic glory'. He is the elder sister of the Prologue, as well as Phoebus Apollo. Apart from a couple of diabolical features, ('a goat hoof and two goat horns'), he is indistinguishable from the 'real' Christ and he appears with a marionette, clearly resembling the son of the Prologue. His 'speech' reveals his Machiavellian intentions in that he will gain control of the whole of society by

pretending to support the 'moral objectives' of those in authority while inflaming their 'righteous indignation' against subversive elements in the community: 'permissives, regressives', etc., in order that they will not perceive his 'ambition - to sterilize the nation!' This foreshadows a later stage of the opera. At the same time, by clamping a pig mask over the face of the marionete, a link is established with the symbolism of the Prologue (see the appearance of the younger brother and associated 'commercial' for 'Pashcal Porky'). The Satanic element is enhanced by 'white haloes of light' exploding around the pig mask. This amplifies Antichrist's reference to 'the festival of light' - presumably an appropriate pun on the machinations of Mary Whitehouse. The significance of the halos of light is also clarified by the crusaders' final chorus: 'Welcome to the brotherhood of the elite', etc. As they leave, together with the hot gospeller and Antichrist, leaving the surgeons to resume their 'operation', it becomes evident that this was another 'flashback' involving the dummy.

He is diagnosed as suffering from 'paranoid delusions of a pseudo-religious nature', and the revelation that his heart is a chocolate structure containing all manner of confectionery symbolizes the sentimentality of most Christian propaganda - a further parody on the Salt Lake City experience. The 'operation' ends with the patient receiving a replacement 'ursatz heart, enormous and vulgar, of paste

diamonds', while the surgeons sing a very similar chorus to that which had concluded the 'brain surgery sequence': 'You must feel pain/You must feel shame/You must feel revulsion', etc.

The seventeenth 'commercial' conflates aspects of Plates 115/116 and their associated text. The psychedelic light show with which the advert begins is reminiscent of the appearance of Antichrist, while the display of diamonds extends the imagery of the 'ursatz heart'. The 'Ten styles of diamond pig-hearts/And seven of diamond dog-collars' are derived from Revelations, Chapter 12, Verse 3, but there is no obvious source for the '3 x 6 jewellers', except that it faintly echoes (possibly the diabolic connotations) of the '3-in-1 chilblain powders' of the 14th 'commercial'. 'Sign of the serpent' refers to Verse 9.

The 'lullaby', sung by the four surgeons to the patient leads to the eighteenth 'commercial' for 'beast matches'. The accompanying 'explosion of light' establishes it as a variant of the previous 'advertisement'. Together with the 'lullaby', the 'beast matches' introduce an extended 'flashback' incorporating a further 'dream sequence' in which the surgeons 'analeptically divulge a few mischievous facts' about the patient's sexual history. There are also a series of references to the Prologue which heighten the work's structural ambiguity by suggesting the possibility of cyclic

form, in contrast to the essentially linear construction of the individual sections.

The episode begins with a small boy and girl ('simple marionettes') playing 'doctors' to the consternation of 'mam' (of the Prologue), who chastizes them accordingly, leading to 'commercial' 19. The 'display of leather straps, whips, chains, etc.' is obviously derived from Revelations, Chapter 12, Verse 5, concerning the 'man-child who was to rule all the nations with a rod of iron', but it also relates to the fourth 'Station' of Vesalii Icones: 'The Flagellation', as well as to the continuing influence of certain aspects of Victorian 'morality', including its association with some forms of fetishistic behaviour, or perversion. Throughout the episode, Maxwell Davies presents images of sexual deviance to illustrate the thesis that so-called 'Victorian values' enshrined in the ideal of the 'bourgeois family' are fundamentally corrupt - the negative elements of parental influence is a theme frequently encountered in the poetry of Philip Larkin, a creative artist of different sensibility in all other respects.

After the 19th 'commercial', the episode continues with the 'jazz dream sequence' involving the 'patient at the age of the son of the Prologue'. The 'dirty mackintoshes' worn by the two male and two female dancers recall the plastic equivalents of the 6th 'commercial' and their demonic status

is confirmed by means of grotesque 'transexual' features. The comparison with 'the Renaissance Temptation of St. Anthony' creates another link with The No 11 Bus: Scene 8, 'The Hermit'.

'Commercial' 20 combines elements of Plate 116 with Plate 117 (Bartsch 74), 'The Sea Monster and the Beast with the Lamb's Horns', Revelations, Chapter 13, Verses 1/13, Chapter 14, Verses 14/17, and Plate 119 (Bartsch 73), 'The Whore of Babylon', Revelations, Chapter 17, Verses 1/4, Chapter 18, Verses 1/21, Chapter 19, Verses 11/15. It also features the 'smiling, planned, happy family . . . from the Prologue', except that the younger brother is ' . . . cut off, literally, vertically down the middle'. The 'product', 'Babylon Gossamer', refers particularly to Chapter 17, Verses 1/4, Chapter 18, Verses 3/9, and ironically to Chapter 14, Verses 14/17. The ensuing 'tap dance number, 1930s style', is an extension of the 'jazz dream sequence'. Two couples appear, and when the one pair is revealed as 'two boys', the other is transformed into a judge and policeman. The boys are arrested, tried before a 'jury of highly respectable citizens' (depicted on a scroll) and convicted. Their prison sentence is conveyed by holding 'a little prison window grill' in front of their faces.

The theme of retribution is expanded in television 'commercial' 21. It is again based on Plate 119, especially

Revelations, Chapter 18, Verses 1/21, describing the fall of Babylon. The picture of buildings being demolished recalls the images of total destruction projected during the scene involving Zeus/Hera, but although people are shown being killed by falling masonry, the 'Disney-style speech balloon' makes 'the violence seem 'funny''. The jingle: 'Millstones of Babylon', etc. therefore refers specifically to Verse 21.

The surgeons are then transformed into authority figures, as in the early stages of the Main Act - this time, a bishop, policeman, judge, trade union leader. Their speeches parody the way in which such eminent 'worthies's attempt to reflect popular sentiments about homosexuals, drug users and other 'permissives'. They are accompanied, respectively, by 'religious-style music'; 'sub-military rumtutum band music'; 'stirring, solemn, patriotic music, like the introduction to a T.V. epic'; 'London 'popular' music, pub style'. Together with the patient, aged, in this instance, about 25, his role performed by the dancer who had played the cat, they participate in the subsequent 'mime number', their parts also played by dancers and accompanied by 'dramatic silent cinema-style 'chase' music'. This is a 'public toilet sequence' involving adjacent gents' and ladies's 'conveniences', and the theme of deviance is 'developed' in terms of a farce routine. All manner of compromising situations are suggested as those taking part enter, leave,

or are hauled into respective cubicals, including the policeman descending from the roof after taking notes. The 'judge, as previously, is in 'drag'.

Plate 119 is also the source of 'commercial' 22, particularly Revelations, Chapter 19, Verses 11/15. It is not only the name of the white horse, 'Faithful and True' (Verse 11), but also the description of his eyes as of 'flaming fire' (Verse 12) which is appropriate to an 'advertisement' for whisky. The reference to a 'rod of iron with which to smite the nations' (Verse 15), refers back to Chapter 12, Verse 5, while the concluding lines of the jingle: 'Try a bottle of true and faithful,/What an aphrodisiac, go on, be a devil', function as an ironic 'introduction' to the climax of the opera.

The next episode comprises the final stage of the 'operation', in which castration is seen as the ultimate 'cure' for the patient's refusal to conform to 'normal' social behaviour. As with the 'brain surgery' and 'heart surgery' sequences, various items are pulled out of the 'patient's under-belly: two large blue balloons, . . . sausages, black puddings', etc., the section ending with the surgeons' familiar chorus: 'You must feel pain,/You must feel shame,/You must feel revulsion'.

'Commercial' 23 establishes a clear link between the final



stages of the Main Act and the equivalent section of the Prologue. Together with the final 'commercial', it is based on Plate 120 (Bartsch 75), 'The Angel with the Key Hurls the Dragon into the Abyss, and another Angel shows St. John the New Jerusalem', Revelations, Chapter 20, Verses 1/3, Chapter 21, Verses 9/12, Chapter 22, Verse 8. 'Commercial' 23 refers particularly to the 'Angel with the Key', consequently to Chapter 20, Verses 1/3. It is for all manner of 'locks and keys', including 'a Seven Seals chastity belt'. The cat/dragon of the end of the Prologue is 'chained and padlocked', and in line with the text, this symbolizes the defeat of Satan in preparation for the 'New Jerusalem'. However, the final lines add an appropriate note of caution: 'But God help us if the dragon/Ever break loose from Castle Cannon'.

Accordingly, the surgeons' final chorus is a victorious 'hymn', 'in the name of all humanity'. The final verse establishes a link with the preceding 'commercial' and also signifies the 'triumph of the state': 'Towards anti-social disease/To the future we hold the keys/With impartial olympian authority'.

Yet the final 'commercial', based specifically on Revelations, Chapter 21, Verses 9/12, and Chapter 22, Verse 8, immediately adds an ironic 'commentary' to the original 'hymn'. It also contains the most direct comment on

contemporary Britain, accompanying black and white projections of inner city decay ('all shots without people') with a jingle which begins 'Investment real estate in/New Joe Cannonville'. The remainder of the jingle includes images culled from Revelations: 'with high walls and twelve gates/Carved and angels at each', but the main thrust is directed towards present-day society. The ironic effect is enhanced by the fact that the surgeons resume their chorus, with their hymn of victory becoming a hymn of thanksgiving. From their words it is clear that they believe they have created the 'archetypal specimen' as the prelude to the advent of 'resurrected man', and the 'Utopian Millennium'. The similarity of the 'speeches' of the Hot Gospeller and Antichrist, as well as the responses of the Crusaders, is self-evident. The prominence of the male organ (in defiance of the 'surgery' the patient has just undergone), as the dummy is elevated to the height of the theatre, and its transformation into a 'gigantic sub-machine gun', which is pointed at the audience, is clearly intended to be provocative - not only to shock audiences out of their complacency, but also to highlight the dilemma explored by Thomas Mann in Doktor Faustus: 'that in a Godless world, to<sup>1</sup> create God after one's own image is to call up the Devil'. Moreover, the connection with the exploding skull of the Prologue is immediately established with the re-appearance of the head of the cat/dragon from the barrel of the 'gun', accompanied by 'a wonderous 'disco' light show which spits

fire - streamers with lightning effects - which trail above the audience's head'. In the process, the imagery of the illustrations in Jung's Alchemical Studies is recalled and subjected to an appropriate transformation. The head of the cat/dragon is as depicted in the frontispiece of Alchemical Studies, thereby fulfilling the cat's prediction, made in his initial speech; there is also a reference to the Axiom of Maria, as symbolized in the 'classical Hermes Tetracephalus'<sup>2</sup> and 'the Hermes Tricephalus'. It is a further example of the cat/dragon's identification with the son/patient, but by this time, the situation has become ambiguous owing to the links also established with Antichrist.

Thus, after the 'song of the new resurrection', in which the patient outlines the various methods used by the authorities to make people 'conform' to their particular ideology, while in the choruses he identifies with both the principal religious leaders, together with the most notorious tyrants of the distant past and present century, he ascends into the flies and, from the tomb which is brought into the acting area by 'four angels', accompanied by 'inspiring, angelic music', 'the Saviour bursts forth triumphantly . . . in a shaft of light . . . to deliver his message of redemption to the world'. However, as in Vesalii Icones, where the 'resurrection' had involved the appearance of Antichrist, underlined by the music's 'mocking gesture of defiance to the world of appearances',<sup>3</sup> in the opera it is

the Antichrist of the spiritual conversion scene who is revealed, minus his diabolical attributes. This time, his message is not simply mocking, but shocking in its ambiguity, especially in view of the sequence of 'commercials' on which Resurrection is based: 'But I'm only an advert'! The work concludes with 'Antichrist's head slowly transformed into a skull/death's head', during which he gives the appropriate salute. The transformation of his hair into writhing snakes refers to the appearance of Mrs Cerberus in the sixth television 'commercial' and the political rally sequence, thereby recalling the underworld of Greek mythology. It is also another manifestation of the Axiom of Maria, as depicted in illustration B2.

#### Notes.

- <sup>1</sup> S. Pruslin (Editor), 1979, Page 69.
- <sup>2</sup> C. G. Jung, 1968, Page 224.
- <sup>3</sup> S. Pruslin (Editor), 1979, Page 68.

Appendix 4 - List of Scores by Maxwell Davies based on Texts  
by Mackay Brown, together with details of Sources.

- 1     From Stone to Thorn, for Mezzo-Soprano and Ensemble  
(1971): a Setting of Stations of the Cross  
(Fishermen with Ploughs - 1971).
- 2     Fiddlers at the Wedding, for Mezzo-Soprano and  
Ensemble: a setting of four poems: Fiddlers at the  
Wedding, Ikey's day, Roads, Peat Cutting  
(Fishermen with Ploughs).
- 3     Dark Angels, for Mezzo-Soprano and Guitar (1974): a  
setting of two poems: The Drowning Brothers and  
Dead Fires (Fishermen with Ploughs).
- 4     The Seven Brightnesses, for Solo Clarinet (1975):  
Title taken from a phrase in The Drowning Brothers.
- 5     The Door of the Sun, for Solo Viola (1975): Title  
taken from phrase in The Drowning Brothers.
- 6     The Kestrel Paced Round the Sun, for Solo Flute  
(1975): Title taken from a line in Peat Cutting.
- 7     The Martyrdom of St Magnus (1975): Chamber Opera in  
nine scenes: Text adapted from Magnus (1972).
- 8     The Blind Fiddler, for Mezzo-Soprano and Ensemble  
(1976): Text selected from the fictitious Notebook  
attributed to Storm Kolson in A Spell for Green Corn  
(1970). 9. Westerlings, for Unaccompanied Choir  
(1977): A setting of four specially written poems: A  
Golden Whale, The Ancient Tryst, Our Gods

- Uncaring, Landfall.
- 9     Solstice of Light, for Tenor, Chorus and Organ  
(1979): A setting of a specially written poem.
- 10    The Two Fiddlers (1978): Opera for Young People:  
text adapted from short story, The Two Fiddlers.
- 11    Black Pentecost, for Mezzo-Soprano, Baritone and  
Orchestra (1979): Title taken from concluding line of  
Dead Fires; text selected from final chapter of  
Greenvoe (1973).
- 12    Lullaby for Lucy, for unaccompanied choir (1981):  
Setting of an Acrostic For Lucy Rendell.
- 13    Hill Runes, for Guitar (1981): Title taken from  
Hill Runes (Fishermen with Ploughs).
- 14    Into The Labyrinth, for Tenor and Chamber Orchestra  
(1983): Text selected from The Well (1981).
- 15    An Island Nativity (1985): A Nativity Piece for  
Young People: text by the composer after George Mackay  
Brown.
- 16    Sea Runes, for Vocal Ensemble (1985): Setting of  
Sea Runes (Fishermen with Ploughs).
- 17    House of Winter, for Vocal Ensemble (1986): Setting  
of House of Winter (Christmas Poems - 1984).
- 18    Winterfold, for Mezzo-Soprano and Ensemble (1987): A  
setting of The Keeper of the Midnight Gate  
(Winterfold - 1976).